DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 151 947 95 EA 010 444

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TITLE The Alternative School Network: Its Schools, Its Genesis and Its Maintenance.
INSTITUTION Alternative School Network, Chicago, Ill.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 78
CONTRACT NIE-400-76-0065
NOTE 113p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$6.01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Affiliated Schools; *Alternative Schools; *Educational Alternatives; *Educational Coordination; Educational Finance; Elementary Secondary Education; Freedom Schools; *Networks; School Community Relationship; *School Organization

ABSTRACT

The Alternative School Network was established in 1973 as a coordinating structure to unite, for their mutual benefit, the diverse Chicago area alternative schools. The first section of this report summarizes the historical background of the Chicago alternative schools and discusses the organizational structures, students, teachers, funding, administration, legal status, programs, and evaluation of the schools. The second section reviews the history, structure, and function of the Alternative School Network. The final section discusses the significance and necessary conditions for the alternative schools and the Alternative School Network. (MLF)

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The Alternative School Network:

'ts Schools, Its Genesis, and Its Maintenance

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Contract No. 400-76-0065

1978

EA 010 444

PART I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The first alternative schools in the Chicago area were begun by parents. Ancona was started in 1962 by parents in the Hyde Park/University of Chicago area who were interested in the Montessori approach to pre-school education. It has since combined Montessori with open classroom methods, and expanded through the eighth grade.

In 1965, the next school was called the Parents School, partly because the parents wanted to identify themselves as the ones in charge of their children's education (as opposed to the state), and partly because they saw the school in some ways as being for them too. They shared the idea that learning, play and intense involvement in life are all interrelated, and they created the school for both their children and themselves to learn through play and the direct experience of such things as theatre, art and poetry workshops.

They were people who had known each other for some time through the peace movement, through struggles over urban renewal, and through involvement in Second City, an unconventional theatre group, famous for social and political satire. Their commitment to the school had both cultural/artistic and political roots. It was important to them as an imaginative and enriching personal experience, and as a repudiation of the conventional educational system which defined reality and the boundaries of thought to suit the needs of the political and educational establishment. For a long time the parents were both teachers and administrators of the school, only much later hiring teachers from outside their group.

The Parents School was followed by several other parent-cooperative schools most of which were in the Hyde Park, South Shore or Near North side neighborhoods. Some schools (Coop 3, Family Free) are still in existence. Others operated for a few years and folded. Without detailed records on each school, it is impossible to say why they closed. In most cases it seems

to have been financial problems often caused by a loss of tuition when students moved and could no longer attend the school. In at least one case, Coop School 2, the school closed because of police harrassment of the school due to several of the parents' involvement in the peace and civil rights movement.

While radical, predominately middle class, people were organizing parent-cooperatives, a similar phenomenon was occuring in Chicago's inner city. In 1965 CAM (The Christian Action Ministry) was running a tutoring program on Chicago's West Side as a means of helping students learn to read and write well enough to survive. In 1967 CAM expanded the program and developed a full time school with 29 students.

CAM and the parent cooperatives essentially were examples of the two main types of alternative schools- the free and freedom schools.

The first comes out of the Summerhill tradition of A. S. Neill. It is based on the belief that children who grow up in loving, supportive environments, who are free from coercion and learn to make their own decisions and choices, will grow up to be mature adults whose lives are integrated and autonomous, not dependent on external standards and rules to ensure happiness and self-direction.

Freedom schools, on the other hand, were not so concerned with individual as with collective freedom and with community power. They grew out of the civil rights and voter registration movements in the sixties and primarily aimed at developing literacy and other skills necessary to survival. They grew from the tradition of community organizations identifying and then attempting to meet the needs of community members. A major force in this period was the Black Panther Party, which initiated health, housing and educational programs for people in black and poor communities, thereby educating people in two ways. It became clear that the existing, status-quo institutions

were not doing all that was possible to meet community needs; and people learned that if community institutions were under the control of the people who used them, they could be made to meet those needs. Both these lessons are part of the fiber of alternative school practice and philosophy.

The success of the parent cooperatives and CAM Academy served as examples to the groups across the city who started their own schools until a major educational movement developed within the Chicago area involving 40-50 independent alternative schools.

The question, of course, arises as to why this phenomenom occurred in Chicago. To answer that question we need to look at the philosophical and cultural background of the late 60's and the political nature of Chicago and its public schools.

The mid and late 60's saw a period of intellectual ferment in the United States. The civil rights movement and the Viet Nam war caused people to examine many of the institutions and ideas they had taken for granted. Schools did not escape this scrutiny.

Inspired by the writings of Paul Goodman, Dr. Spock , John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and Piaget people began to question the quality of their schools.

Perhaps the most powerful idea was that of freedom. It appears sometimes in the Rousseauian notion of the child's innate goodness and desire to learn, if only given the freedom to do so. It is also central to the belief that unless people are given the tools to understand and act in the world, they never can be free.

The discovery and rediscovery of these ideas came against the background of the Chicago Political Structure. Chicago is dominated by the Democratic Party, a powerful political organization which has been, until quite recently, almost totally invulnerable to challenge or demand for change. The style of the "machine" is strong central control, a tight hierarchial

structure based on political power, patronage and corruption. The Democratic machine maintains firm control through the permeation of the patronage system into almost every aspect of city life and by mayoral appointment of key administrative posts.

The Chicago Public Schools do not escape the control of the Democratic Machine. The school's central office is riddled with patronage workers. Politically connected contractors and unions ripped off large amounts of money from the central budget. Members of the Chicago School Board, though recommended by a supposedly autonomous citizens' committee, are actually chosen by the Mayor to balance off various interests (the Black vote, the Jewish vote, etc.). The Board of Education and the whole apparatus of school administration have been notoriously protective of the status quo in Chicago schools, though there have been moments of responsiveness and experimentation.

Public dismay and outrage at Board policies reached a peak in the early sixties when Benjamin Willis was the Superintendent of Schools. Objection to Willis and his administration derived from a range of actions and attitudes. It centered, however, on Willis' policies that were clearly aimed at maintaining residential segregation patterns. While classrooms remained empty in schools in white neighborhoods, Willis brought in mobil classrooms ("Willis wagons") or even built new schools in ghetto areas in order to keep black students from moving across the boundaries of white communities. This frequently led to overcrowding in minority and changing neighborhoods and less money available for increasing the quality of education anywhere.

The movement to remove Willis from office was highly significant to Chicago residents in the sixties. It involved the largest number of people ever mobilized on an educational issue. It sensitized many people to issues of racism, segragation and quality education. It forced the machine to find another superintendent. And it raised expectations about the potential for people, through mass and community action, to change the institutions that control their lives.

Many of the founders of the early alternative schools in Chicago were people who had been involved in the struggle against Willis and school segregation. These struggles in the late 1960's focussed on the importance of the participation and power of parents and communities in the education of their children, an important influence on the development of an alternative schools movement in Chicago.

The conditions that led to the struggles in the 60's have continued as has the growth of independent alternative schools. In the last year 23,000 students dropped out of the Chicago Public Schools. It was estimated that 51,536 students, 10% of the total school population, were chronic truants. Reading and math scores in inner city poverty schools continued to decline. It is conditions like these that have been the root cause of the growth of alternative schools in Chicago.

WHAT ARE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS?

Ever since the present movement toward Alternative Schools began in the early 60's, defining what alternative schools are, has been a major problem facing researchers, governmental agencies, teachers and people involved in alternative education. Since Alternative Schools programs developed in reaction to the monolithic standardized programs offered in public schools the alternative schools by nature are highly diverse and individualized programs. This is especially true of the schools in the Alternative Schools Network. As autonomous programs each developed separately on their own. They represent an extremely wide range of different programs and organizational styles.

Indeed the major characteristic actually held in common by all the Network schools is that each is different from every other. There <u>are</u> patterns that schools fit into (see Appendix C), but if one takes all the different aspects of a school's functioning, it will usually be different in at least one of them from the other schools following its pattern. For instance, one can look at schools in terms of teaching style, or curriculum, in terms of the ages of the students, in terms of administrative structure, of the school's major goals, of its political viewpoint, in terms of its financial stability, and so on. No more than one or two of the schools look like any other when seen from all the possible points of view.

Despite this diversity,however, there are some generalizations that can safely be made:

1.) Each school is directly controlled by the people (parents, teachers, students, community people) most directly affected by it. The organizational form of this may vary but decisions are made at the community level about the direction the school should take and not at a Central Board of Education or other Body. Indeed the diversity and flexibility of the schools stem directly from this autonomous community control.

2.) None of the schools is run for profit; none has a guaranteed fiscal base. Even in parent-run schools which require tuition, families can move in the middle of the year, leaving the budget in difficult straits. It is true of every school that the search for funding is a continual process and problem.

3.) With one exception the schools are not part of a conventional school system. The only exception, St. Francis Cabrini, is an archdiocesan school. Schools may, however, be affiliated in some way with conventional schools for purposes of accreditation or shared resources. In those cases they retain administrative and programmatic autonomy.

4.) The schools consciously confront and attempt to eradicate racism and sexism within their confines and deal with those issues and others of potent significance to their students as they arise.

5.) The schools are consciously organized to meet and respond to student's needs. Class sizes are always smaller than in public schools and most traditional private (Catholic, etc.) schools. This enables the teacher to give more attention to and develop a personal relationship with each student.

6.) Though not without exception, the schools generally operate with the assumption that the status quo is not inevitable.

Even the schools whose basic aim is to teach people the quite basic skills they have missed elsewhere, see it as a means of empowerment, of enabling students to be able to make choices, rather than having to accept or react against the choices made for them.

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS NETWORK?

Alternative schools have existed in Chicago since 1962. It was not until May of 1973 that an alliance, or "network" of the schools came into being. The schools had operated, and continue to operate, autonomously, with individually found sources of funding, with different kinds of students, goals, teaching procedures, etc. At the point at which they came together to form a network, it was beginning to be clear that there was unnecessary duplication of effort in some directions, that some schools had information that would save others time and trouble, that funding agencies might look more kindly on programs that had greater impact than on one small school population, and that public understanding and acceptance of alternative schools could be increased by a show of "strength in diversity" that has become the hallmark of the Alternative Schools Network.

The Network has grown since that time from simply a group of people meeting to share information and discuss common problems to an organization that is able to concretely help schools expand their programs, forestall and sometimes eliminate those problems. It was, and remains, an orgainization that exists to meet the expressed needs of schools, rather than one that imposes requirements on member schools for its own purposes(other than dues and designation of representatives.) The primary significance of the Alternative Schools Network lies in the work of the schools, and their impact on students and communities.

There are thirty-nine schools in the ASN, with a total of 452 paid staff people and 3394 students.[1] This is a large phenomenon even for a major urban area. Its significance is broadened by consideration of three functions the ASN is itself able to perform; 1) It has brought together in one organization a large number of highly autonomous, individualistic schools, serving many different ages and types of students and communities of the metropolitan area, all determined to survive, many of whom are in competition for the same

financial sources for their survival. Through the ASN, schools have been able to share programs, problems, solutions, and a broader context to the work they are doing. 2) By bringing schools together, the ASN additionally enables funding sources to see their resources reaching more people and having more impact. The ability to attract funding for school programs lends them stability and enables schools to enrich and strengthen the education of their students. 3) The ASN has the potential for greater impact on other systems, including public schools and even the juvenile justice system than does any individual school. Alternative schools and programs have already been started in the public school system. If, or as long as, they do not serve the students who are either out of school or attending non-public alternative schools, their limitations remain clear and visible. Furthermore, the variety of successful programs in the alternative schools brings home the inappropriateness, endemic to the public system, of expecting all students to learn in the same ways.

ORGANIZERS OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Perhaps the best way to begin an overview of schools in the Alternative Schools Network is to look at the process by which the schools get organized. This is important for two reasons: 1) It explains further the issues, processes and reasons for starting an alternative school. 2) It provides probably the best classification system for the schools, as the process by which the school got started ususally determines the organizational structure by which it is run later on. There are essentially four distinct types of people who have organized schools --parents, teachers, students and community groups, which in turn is reflected in four basic catagories of schools: parent cooperative, staff run, student input and community board.

The first classification of schools are parent cooperatives -- schools that are started and run by parents. 1.) An example is Coop #3 (so named because they were the third cooperative school on the south side).

Many of the parents who initiated Coop #3 had had their children in the public schools, and had tried unsuccessfully to encourage greater flexibility and child centeredness there. Others, again were firmly opposed to government control of the quality and content of their childrens' education, and had never sent them to public school. Before the school opened in the fall of 1969, the parents met for six months, reading , discussing, soul-searching. As in Parents School, many of them had been involved in the peace and cultural movements of the '60's, and had known each other for some time. They wanted the school to encourage curiosity, independence, cooperation, and children's appreciation of themselves and each other. The emphasis was not on the 3 R's, but on "learning how to learn". The value placed on trust and individual differences was most palpable in their method for collecting tuition, which was based on parents pledging the amount of money they felt they could afford toward a commonly agreed upon budget. Not until last year was a set tuition found to be necessary. From the beginning Coop #3 has hired teachers, with parents playing a strong advisory and support role, including a great deal of volunteering in the classroom.

2.) The second classification is staff run schools - Schools that were started by teachers. Like parents, teachers in the late 60's and early 70's became aware of the problems within the Public Schools. They wanted to be able to teach, not have to police, or haggle with administrators all day. In a few cases, the idea and possibility of trying it on their own would germinate and grow roots, discussions with parents and other teachers would encourage them, and sooner or later a school would bloom.

Marva Collins, who had been teaching in the public school in her west side community for thirteen years, found that the motivation and excitement about learning that was generated in her classroom seemed to disappear as kids went on to other teachers. She could not bear to see children who had been eager and good students with her jumping over desks and creating mayhem two

years after leaving her class. She didn't see any valid reason for so many ostensible educational failures, so last year she took a giant cut in salary, a few materials she gathered or had donated, five children, and started a school (Daniel Hale Williams Westside Prep School). Though her students (there are now fifteen) are from typically "deprived" west side homes, seven and eight year olds are reading Greek myths, Robinson Crusoe, Little Women. Marva, the children and their parents, and visitors who observe, are excited and inspired by what they've done.

It is not only teachers in public schools that encounter bureaucracy, overcrowdedness, confusion over goals. The Learning Network , also on the west side, was started in 1972 by four people who had been teaching for several years in a parochial shcool in the area. They each saw 120 students a day, in rotation. The administrators, priests and parents all wanted to run the school, but no one knew how. A number of the teachers had been meeting together to try to resolve some of the problems, when someone jokingly suggested starting their own school. These four took the idea seriously, checked the legal aspects, looked for a building, and talked to parents. They did not want a "free" school, but one that would prepare children with both basic skills and self confidence, enabling them to enter any high school of their choice in the city. The first two years the teachers worked for no salaries, all of them holding night and part-time jobs to survive. Now most of their costs are paid by H.E.W., for workshops they do with parents and public school personnel. Three of the original four teachers are still teaching at Learning Network. Their success is indicated and guaranteed by the much greater numbers of students and parents who want to come to the school than they can take.

3.) Third type of schools are schools in which students have helped initiate a new school. In DuPage County, a conservative Republican suburb , it was the students's experience of protesting against the Cambodian invasion and the Kent State killings, and their subsequent suspensions, that led to

the formation of the DuPage Community School. They and their parents seriously discussed what kind of school they wanted to attend, and together they generated the resources to start it. Once the school opened the students continued to take a major responsibility in the administration of the school (they help hire and fire, set policy, etc.) and in their chosen obligation to earn half their tuition.

Students at Alvernia High school on Chicago's north side also initiated the discussions with teachers and administrators that led to the formation of a special experimental program within the school , and later to a new school, Chrysalis.

4.) The fourth type of schools are those that have been started by concerned community people or groups. People in the community have also become alarmed at the high number of drop-outs and push-outs from the schools; at the numbers of young people who leave school with no marketable skills, or chance of going on to college or other further training; alarmed at the violence in the schools and the numbers of students they could see all over who were turned off, and turned against the schools.

In response to this situation, B.U.I.L.D. Institute, in the south suburbs, was started four years ago, though the idea for the school originated in the 1967-69 gang wars in the area. Melvin Booker, while working as a juvenile probation officer, concluded that a good deal of stealing and drug-taking came from students' lack of success in school, together with a lack of jobs and job skills. He got together with staff at a local college and at the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, to develop a program that would work on both academic and vocational skills, with emphasis on personal and family counseling.

In Uptown's Native American community, many young children of early elementary age are out of school too. Partly this stems from the insensitivity they have found in the schools to their needs and culture, partly because they

are poor. Sometimes they do not have adequate clothes in which to go to school. Sometimes they need to stay home to babysit even younger children. Generally their parents have not found that sending them to school was worth the effort. The Native American Committee, a community organization, had been working to increase the flexibility and autonomy of a Board of Education high school serving Indian children. In time they decided it was impossible to change the public school and decided to start a school for younger children, outside the system. The Native American Committee School now has 16 children and focuses on basic skills and Indian culture, as well as giving each child a full, good meal every day (often the only one they get).

Within these classifications there is a wide range of different reasons and motivating factors for starting alternative schools. CAM Academy and Lakeview Schools Coalition began with the express purpose of providing a model for change in the public schools, hoping to have impact on more people than was possible in a single alternative school. St. Mary's Center for Learning was a traditional parochial school until a North Central evaluation pointed out that the school had not changed at all to meet the needs of the changing community around it. Some schools have focused on the possibilities of combining affective with academic learning, such as the Gestalt Free School (now Rogers Park Community School), which grew out of a desire to implement principles of Gestalt psychology in teaching children how to cope with and appropriately express their feelings.

Other schools started more as supplements to public schools, trying to accomplish the same things, but in a more humane and effective manner. Often students will come to these schools for awhile, and then return to public school, more able to cope and succeed. This is more likely to be true of schools primarily serving drop-outs and push-outs, and those with vocational training needs.

Finally, there are a number of schools with either the primary or

secondary purpose of increasing the social and political conscicusness of their students, helping them see the possibilities of initiating change in their lives and in their communities. The people in these schools see the failure of public education as relating to broader societal problems than can be dealt with in the limited context of educational reform.

Two examples of this type of school are Rafael Cancel Miranda Puerto Rican High School where students learn from current community issues of employment, housing and justice. They study the history of Puerto Rico, group dynamics, and community organizing, as well as a regular high school curriculum. The People's Foundation, located near a large public housing project, is an adult education program that has been affiliated with Shaw University in North Carolina. It is now in a process of developing a specialized program in community development, focussing on those skills that are useful in communities; small businesses, credit unions, housing, social planning and welfare, and education. Its students are people who have been active in the community for some time, and want to use that experience, as well as expand on it, in a college program.

THE STUDENTS

Regardless of how concerned parents, teachers , and community people are about the education of children and young people, or how well they construct educational alternatives, those alternatives must interlock with the real and felt needs of students, or they would not continue to exist. Who are the students in alternative schools, and why do they come?

There are approximately 3400 students in alternative schools in the Chicago area. Of those, 1840 are female (54%). Most of them (72%) are black, and the largest percentage (40%) are between 16 and 20 years old. Of the students for whom figures are available, 66% are from families with incomes under $6,000.00 a year, and 47% are from single-parent or otherwise

non-intact families (many of the students are in foster homes, fending for themselves, or living with friends).[2] The fewest number of students in a school is five (Benjamin Bannacker) and the largest number is 944 (St Mary's Adult School). Most schools range between 15 and 75 students.

Admissions qualifications and procedures vary widely , almost all the schools require an interview with a parent, or parental approval and support for the student's entering the school. Exceptions to this involve situations in which students are already on their own, or in which the home life is a large part of the problem, and the student needs as much distance and autonomy from it as possible. In the parent-run elementary schools, a prospective student and his/her parent (s) are generally asked to spend time observing and participating in the school for a day or so before interviews are held. Parents are informed of parental responsibilities in the school, and sounded out about their willingness to assume them. Few parent-run schools will knowingly take on a seriously disturbed or handicapped child, though this is not always the case, and not always known in advance. Otherwise, admission is based on parent and child understanding and acceptance of how the school works, and on the nature of the rest of the student body (whether or not there are already too many boys, six year olds, etc. to keep a reasonable balance.).

At many of the high schools specifically oriented to drop-outs and push-outs (CAM Academy and Garfield Alternative, for example), one entrance requirement is that students cannot come from public school, that is, that they must have already left it, for whatever reason. In many cases this requirement is a direct result of funding guidelines. Students who are formally excluded or who have dropped out of public schools are eligible often for special state money to cover their education. In other cases the requirement stems from a committment on the part of the school to help dropouts and other students who have no other options open to them.

At B.U.I.L.D. Institute, students must have some indication of a vocational handicap, arising from mental, physical or other disability. They cannot have a history of extreme violence, i. e. armed robbery or murder.

Some schools, because their money comes from the state solely for the purpose of special education, require that students be "excluded" from the public school, that is, that they have gone through a process which diagnoses their problem (s) as being beyond what their local public shcool has the ability to handle. Some schools, because their money comes from adult education funds, require that students be at least sixteen. Others, with money from Model Cities, can only take students from a designated poverty area.

Prologue, a school in Uptown, requries that students come from within a fairly small area because they want to maintain a firm sense of community. Many of their Appalachian students had dropped out of the local public high school partially because its size and complexity were scary and overwhelming.

Many of the reasons students and parents are anxious to leave the public schools have already been discussed. The problem stems from the large size of most public schools. Many inner-city public schools have several thousands students. The result is a large unwieldy institution that is unresponsive to the needs of both parents and students. In recent years public schools have become increasingly violent. There were 2 murders and untold numbers of stabbings, shootings, and rapes in Chiago Public Schools last year. It's not uncommon for gang rivalries to carry over into the school. Often street gangs recruit new members around Chicago's elementary and high schools. Many students will drop out or become truant rather than join a gang. Street gangs will also extort money from students and deal drugs in the schools.

The result of all this chaos and bureaucracy is an environment in which it is extremely difficult to learn. The major reason students leave public school is that they are not learning there. The structure of many public schools causes students to fail and not to succeed. In many cases students

with real learning disabilities are ignored and don't receive the special help they need, in other cases the students rebel and cause discipline problems or are just too bored to care what happens.

Younger children generally come to alternative schools because their parents want them to. Parents usually want to have greater control in determining the kind of education their children are getting. Sometimes they are looking for a place which, because of smaller size, religious ethos (as with Bethel CAM and St. Francis Cabrini) and /or greater interaction between staff and parent, can provide more discipline, and growth toward self-discipline. Some parents who simply do not want their children in public schools for any or all of the reasons stated above, simply find an alternative school to be the (sometimes)cheapest, (sometimes) most accessible choice possible. Some parents feel their child is not moving fast enough in public school, through boredom or lack of individualized attention. They are looking for higher standards for their children, and the expectation on the part of teachers that they can and will succeed.

Many parents in Hyde Park are also looking for a school with racial balance. Traditional private schools in the area are expensive, and often too pressured, too slick, too homogeneous, too exclusive. Along with control and input, parents want access to administrators and teachers, and the knowledge that those administrators and teachers are not there just because its a job, but out of real concern for the students. For some parents and their children, it is very simply a last chance.

Students come for many of those same reasons, and because the schools afford them a freedom and respect they have not found before. Many times in interviews with people in schools, both staff and students mention the importance of feeling <u>comfortable</u> in a school where no one is looked down on, no one is the enemy. Even rival gang members are no problem. Alternative schools have become neutral territory to the gangs. Some students come already

motivated, itching for a chance to go beyond textbook limits. Others come because they can't fit in anywhere else, the've gotten the message they can't succeed, and their alternative is no job, no diploma, and possible jail. In a few cases, they can't make it in the alternative school either. But often they can, and the success these students experience is sometimes the first they've ever had.

It is not possible to get precise figures on the length of time students stay at the schools, or where they have gone when they have left. While schools keep records on individual students they do not usually keep cummulative statistics on their student population. Unfortunately the researchers of this paper did not have time to create such statistics. People involved with the schools though can make some generalizations about the length of their students stay at the school and where they go when they leave.

In the parent-run elementary schools students generally stay until they are 8 or 9 years old. Then they tend to leave as parents are no longer able to afford tuitions, or as they begin to burn-out, lose interest, or worry that their child may not be able to compete academically with others when they eventually return to public school. However, at Phoenix School, those parental sentiments resulted in the school changing toward a more standard curriculum in the morning to cover the three R's though retaining student choice and a looser structure in the afternoon. At Foundation Center School in Oak Park, parents relaxed after graduating children generally made the Dean's List in the regular Oak Park public high school. In the last three years only two children have left Foundation School for reasons other than graduation or moving out of the area. At the Learning Network, only three students have transferred out of the school in the four years of its existence.

Among the high schools, the average stay for students is two years. This is largely because in many schools students don't come until their junior year, or until they are 16 (in the case of schools funded by the Chicago Urban Skills Center Adult Education Program). While most high school

students, like those in elementary schools, hear about the school through word of mouth, many do come because they are referred by agencies and institutuions such as the Juvenile Courts, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Special Education cooperatives, mental health agencies, the Unified Delinquency Prevention Service (requiring a minimum of three criminal convictions), and the public schools.

Follow-up records would be necessary in order to know what happens to these students, mostly drop-outs and push-outs from the public schools. Unfortunately, many of the schools have not kept follow up records over the years, and are just now realizing the potential importance of those figures. Oye Khale at Garfield Alternative Schools really pushes the importance of college to his students, and tries to make sure that every graduate at least has the option of attending college. He says that about two-thirds of the graduates of Garfield have gone either to college or to trade shcool. (More women than men go to college.) Twenty graduates of Creative Education are now in colleges in Chicago. Three of Southern School's eight-person graduating class last year are now in college, and large percentages from Woodlawn Prep and Chrysalis go each year. Most of the other graduates either get jobs or further training in a trade or vocational school. Students who leave before graduating generally either go back to public school or another alternative school. Some get jobs, a few end up in jail.

STAFF

Given the diversity of student needs and the goal of alternative schools to meet them, not everyone can teach successfully in these schools. And it is not easy to tell which people can. Teachers come to alternative schools with a wide range of backgrounds, experience, credentials. Only eleven of the schools either require or happen to have all their teachers certified. Several others have some staff with certification. Many but

not all of the schools require that teachers have a B. A. Schools as various as Sullivan House, Operation Impact, Ancona, CAM Academy and DuPage Community School feel that it's important not to require any particular academic preparation of teachers, but to be open to the skills, character and experience of many kinds of people.

Whatever the formal qualifications, the characteristics most sought in teachers break down into four main areas. The most important is that of general character. Qualities such as patience, flexibility, warmth, sense of humor, maturity, self-confidence, and responsibility were mentioned over and over as primary requisites. Also highly important is the ability to relate comfortably with people, both students and other adults, without condescension or rigidity. This means being open to criticism (from both students and adults.) It also often means being able to listen to and counsel students in a wide range of concerns.

Appropriate experience is also important, whether that be teaching in an open situation, working with groups, professional experience such as botany, carpentry or photography, or in-depth study in an academic area. Most important here is experience with the kinds of students that are in the school and the kinds of problems they have. (Many schools require that teachers be willing to obtain further teacher training after they are hired.) The Alternative school teacher also must be a jack (or jill) of all trades. In most schools but particularly in the schools without separate administrators (46% of the schools), teachers have many more jobs than teaching and counselling. They order and make materials, write proposals, attend and speak at community functions, visit students' homes, do janitorial work. All of this can be exhausting, as well as time-consuming, and underscores the dedication these teachers bring to their jobs. Lastly, but by no means least, teachers must be committed to teaching, and to the kind of education the school is trying to provide, to the extent that they will tolerate lower pay than they might make elsewhere,

more demands in terms of time and the range of tasks they perform , and the certainty of very hard work.

A basic premise of alternative school philosophy is that the relationship between student and teacher is a crucial element in the learning process. Being able to hire teachers who can work with the particular students in the particular programs of a given school is one of the key factors in having a successful program. The schools in the Network have the advantage of being able to do their own thing. Hiring is done at the school level by the people involved in the school. As such staff people can be selected that best fit the programs needs.

How do the schools go about the search? In many cases, teachers come to a school because they know the people there, either as friends, or from the community. Sometimes people with specific skills are sought out by the school and recruited. Mostly, either by word of mouth or through advertisements in a newspaper, people just show up; interested, unsure. The process then is one of reconnoitering, a mutual sizing up. Usually prospective teachers spend some time observing the school in action. Then there are interviews, which can be with any or all of the staff, administrators, parents, or students. At the Coop schools, interviews with parents are several hours long, a real exploration of personality, proclivity, purpose.

At Chrysalis, in addition to lengthy interviews in which students play an important part, a series of sixty questions (developed by Selection Research Institute) are given to a prospective teacher to assess various strengths, in accordance with twelve variables that have been determined to be characteristic of good teaching. They have found this to be helpful in terms of developing a staff which is balanced in various fields and skills (some teachers are good with groups, some are better with individuals, etc.). In about 30% of the schools, the administrative board has final say over who is hired as a teacher (usually with recommendations from students and / or staff). The staff has

final responsibility in another 30% of the schools. In the rest, it's either the parents who decide, or a mixture of various members of the school community.[3]

Although there are fifteen schools where the teachers comprise all of the paid staff, in the schools overall, teachers make up 76% of the total staff. (The ratio of students to paid teachers averages 10 to 1). The other 24% is comprised of administrators, counselors, and office workers.

This does not, however, accurately represent the full staffs of the schools. Thirteen of the schools make use of volunteers to a significant extent. DuPage Community School and Rafael Cancel Miranda rely on volunteers for the bulk of their teaching staff. At DuPage Community, members of the community come in once each semester to offer courses. Students sign up for the ones that interest them, and teacher/volunteer and students then set up a mutually agreeable schedule for the class to meet. Rafael Cancel Miranda depends primarily on people who teach elsewhere, in high schools and colleges throughout the city, who come to the school for anywhere from three to twenty-five hours a week to teach, tutor, and help with fundraising and administrative tasks.

A number of schools, particularly, but not limited to the parent-run schools, depend on parents to come in and volunteer on a regular or rotating basis. Generally parents help out in the classroom, work on special projects, accompany or drive a group on a field trip, and work on fundraising events. Occasionally parents teach classes in areas of their expertise. At St. Francis Cabrini Learning Center, which has a Headstart and Followthrough program through the third grade, parents are required to volunteer because the amount of federal funds allocated for the programs is partly based on the number of volunteers they use. Evanston Free School was particularly in need of volunteers this year because its financial state necessitated the departure of some staff.

It is getting harder and harder to depend on volunteers, though. The country's economic crisis has forced many mothers to go to work, and people who had the time before, no longer do. This may end up affecting the quality and character of some of the schools. Both the Parents School Nursery and Coop Kindergarten ask parents when they join the school to have one parent per family volunteer one day per month. Parents as a whole have been very involved in the schools, including doing all the administrative work.

But as more families have two working adults (and with the increase in single parent families), there will not only be less parent involvelment, but also more demand for day care, rather than a half-day kindergarten program. This will inevitably change the nature of what they are trying to do.

Teacher aides are part of the statistics given by schools on teachers; student teachers are not. Both are used freely in the schools and often play equivalent roles to the regular teacher. There are also many part-time people. Nineteen of the schools use some combination of part-time, student teacher, or teacher aide help in the classroom. Altogether there are about 100 such people in the schools. Some have specialized jobs such as music or art, but often even those people help out in other ways as they're needed and able.

All of the schools include counselling as part of the expected, and frequent, duties of staff members. Only five schools, B.U.I.L.D., CAM, St. Mary's, Garfield, and Operation Impact, have staff people specifically for that purpose. At Southern School, a special education school, students are not admitted unless they recognize that they have a problem and are willing to work on it. "Working on it" takes place in a group framework; there is no individual counselling. At any point in the day staff must be willing to take part in intensely personal interactions with students. Everyone, both students and teachers, are required to talk about their total lives, and to be open to criticism as well as support.

Only ten schools have access to outside psychological resources, though many that don't would like to. Usually, as with CAM Academy and Sullivan House, the umbrella funding and admininstrative body either incorporates or can get hold of these services. Sullivan House is itself a Child Welfare Agency, the school being one component. Staff who work in the group homes or do social work with the agency are available to the school (which also included children from outside the agency). Southern School is a formal affiliate of the Edgewater-Uptown Mental Health Center. Christian Action

Ministry, the group of thirteen churches on the west side that created CAM Academy and Bethel-CAM, additionally serves the community with a health center, a housing program, and day care center. CAM also has access to some public school personnel, who give in-service training on dealing with "socially-maladjusted" students. A special education specialist from the public schools also comes twice a week to work with reading and math problems. These people are available through the cooperation of the district superintendent. St. Mary's Center for Learning has used public school teachers and resources for outdoor education and drivers' education.

There is a real range among the schools in terms of in-service and further training of teachers. A few of the schools don't care at all about training, others encourage it, and still others require it. In-service can include sessions at the school with psychologists, educators, social service personnel, etc. Council School had a psychologist who came to the school and gave a several week seminar on family therapy to all the staff. Ancona had a workshop given by a woman who had spent several months in England observing their innovative primary schools (a major inspiration to the open classroom approach). Staff members (and sometimes students or parents) go to workshops elsewhere and bring back their gleanings to the rest of the staff.

Some of these workshops are held at the Teachers Centers (there are three in the area). They include exploring new teaching approaches; experiential science, art and math workshops; discussions of discipline and record keeping; new uses for local museums, and so on. These Teachers' Centers, funded by private grants, are also open for teachers to make materials, talk with each other, and share ideas. They are used and supported by teachers from public, parochial and private schools all over the city. They help break down isolation within and between schools, and are a source of great help and inspiration to teachers in both public and non-public schools throughout the city and suburbs.

FUNDING

The cause of their exhaustion, and the root of almost all the difficulties in alternative schools is money, or the lack of it. Schools that have tuition can't charge more than parents are able to pay, which is never enough to cover the real costs of the school. Eighteen (less than half the schools) collect tuition. Five of them bring in 90% or more of their income from tuition.

Tuition is determined in a number of ways. The two Parents' Schools make up budgets for the year, and then ask each parent to pay a certain percentage of it. Council School has a sliding scale arrangement, computed by family income. (However, only 2% of their income is from tuition). A number of the high schools ask students to pay part of their tuition, in return for which they are helped to find jobs.

Determining and collecting tuition has not been easy to do, particularly lately as the rise in the cost of living has radically raised costs for the schools. Lakeview Schools' Coalition began as a parent-administered school, dependent on the good-will of the parents rather than concrete agreements about tuition payment or responsibility. After the first year's power struggles, the staff of the Coalition asserted its control and formulated a parents' agreement that outlined responsibilities and specific commitments. Parents could no longer go more than a month without paying their tuition (based on a sliding scale) and still keep their child in the school. Since that reorganization of power, parents have spent their energies on the educational part of the school; there has been no more trouble with late or non-existent tuition payments, and administratively the school has run smoothly.

In Coop #3, where voluntary pledges had been enough to keep the school going, the parent body began to change as the children got older, new ones came in, and the boundaries of the school expanded. The parents were no longer a close-knit group of firends who lived near and knew each other. After awhile, some people began to notice and resent the fact that they were straining to

pay their pledges, while people who were giving less to the school had just bought a new car or were vacationing in Florida. This then led to a rearrangement for collecting tuition-- one where everyone had the same amount to pay.

For the parent-run schools, the average tuition is $700.00 a year. Tuitions range from $350.00 a year at the Parents School Nursery (a half day program) to $1000.00 a year at Coop Middle School and DuPage Community School. On an average, tution in parent-run schools covers 80% of the costs of the school. For other schools charging tuition, the range is between $5.00 a month and $750.00 a year. Since costs per student range over-all in the schools between $430.00 and $4,000.00 a year, it is obvious that money must be found elsewhere, and that a lot of time is spent looking for it.

There is barely a stone left unturned in the search. Parents put on a number of benefits, garage sales, auctions, dinners, dances, whatever they can think of. Phoenix School for a number of years sent out a teabag of green tea on St. Patrick's Day, inviting their recipients in a poem to a stay-at-home tea , and asking them for a donation in return. They passed this idea on to Parents' Schools, which then raised some money with it too. Rafael Cancel Miranda has found that it can raise several thousand dollars by holding carnivals this summer. Southern School's students have been making small terrariums with cactus and colored sand designs in the storefront next to their school. They are marketing the plants in stores around the city and making money on them.

Though small hussels and benefits occasionally bring in a fair amount of money (Parents Schools Nursery recently made $1600.00 on a garage sale), they can not be relied upon for the bulk of a school's expenses. Instead, schools turn to a variety of private and public funding sources.

In the middle and late sixties, many experimental alternative schools were able to get at least initial funding from foundations such as Ford , Carnegie, and Lilly. Since that time, however, priorities seem to have

shifted away from educational experimentation, and away from smaller systems with less obvious and immediate impact than larger ones.

Church grants and donations (including the Catholic Church's Campaign for Human Development) are important to five of the schools. A number of schools get small donations and grants (2-8% of their budgets) from a variety of private sources, including local businesses and organizations. Though not necessarily included in stated income, many if not most of the schools have also managed to get donations and loan of equipment and supplies from people, companies and organizations in the community.

By far the most important source of funding for the schools is government; local, state and federal. Seventy percent of the schools depend to a substantial extent on public funds. In sixteen of the schools, public funding accounts for over 75% of the total budget. In four of the schools it accounts for all of it.

Local public funding comes from the City Colleges' Urban Skills Center, the extension program enabling adults to obtain a high school diploma through the G. E. D. equivalency tests. There are about 400 G. E. D. sites in the city. The Skills Center will pay teachers (the only requirement is a B. A.) $8.00 an hour, for a maximum of 11 hours a week. Of the eleven schools using Skills Center staff, nine also give students the option of a regular school diploma. Most students choose this option; it has more meaning to them, as well as status. Skills Center money comes to the schools via the City Colleges which is funded from the city, which is funded from the state of Illinois' Adult Education Program.

Other state money comes to alternative schools directly. Schools that take students who have been excluded from local public schools because of special educational problems not manageable in the local school, are able to obtain up to $2,500.00 a year in tuition from the state for each student so served. Eleven of the schools now have students funded through this source.

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) also funds a number of schools for day care and for educating children who are wards of the state. St. Mary's After School Program serves children whose parents work or are otherwise unable to care for them after school. Operation Impact's job training program is largely supported by DCFS, in the hopes that many of their young people will be taken off the dependent's rolls. Sullivan House, a child welfare agency, is funded through DCFS. and the high school they operate is funded through them.

The State Department of Mental Health has provided financial help to schools, as has the Illinois Office of Education through the Truancy project (see Part II). I.O.E. is also a source for schools in providing surplus property and surplus food. The State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Unified Delinquency Intervention Service have both given money to schools for programs that redirect and give options to youth who might otherwise be without jobs or in jail. The Illinois Law Enforcment Commission is soon to be entering the field for the same reasons. In addition, the Illinois Arts Council has granted over a $3,000.00 to five of the schools through the Network for video projects.

Federal money comes to the schools both in direct grants, and in more circuitious routes through agencies and other programs. Federal CETA (job training) funds go first to the Mayor's Office of Manpower, which then sends it to Model Citites, the Archdiocese, Urban Progress Centers and so on. From there it goes to the schools (among other places). The schools negotiate with the Civil Service or other local agencies rather than directly with Washington. Thirty of the schools have CETA workers. Model Cities, also using federal money with local control over how it is used, is directly funding the educational programs of three of the schools, Garfield Alternative, Cabrini-Green, and Woodlawn Prep. Twelve of the schools also have VISTA workers on staff. The VISTA's do curriculum development, community-outreach

and resource development work.

Other federal funds come to the schools directly. About 80% of the operating costs for the Learning Network are funded through H.E.W. Title VII, Emergency School Aid. They are working to implement part of the Redmond plan for school desegregation, and to help alleviate some of the problems in the public schools in their area. This year their plan focusses on the low reading scores in the community, and they have run workshops and hired consultants to work with teachers and parents in their own and in the public schools. Latino Youth High School is one component of Latino Youth, which has been funded since 1974 as a research and services unit of H.E.W.'s National Institute on Drug Abuse. It is located in the Pilsen area of Chicago, a mostly Chicano community with an extremely high drop out rate from the public schools. H.E.W. has had some concern that Latino Youth has paid too much attention to education. But, as one staff person of Latino Youth High School put it, "Many of the places H.E.W. has funded were schools that developed a drug education program. We are a drug education program that developed into a school." Other sources of federal money have been the National Institute of Mental Health, and the Federal Lunch Program.

These sources of public governmental money are crucial to the schools that qualify for them. Most of the programs that are tapping into government funding are inner city programs. Little or no tuition money is available in these students' families to fund their education. Without government funding of some sort these programs would either not exist or have to cut back on their programs severely.

There are two basic conclusions that can be drawn from this survey of the schools. The first is the need for some form of consistant source of funding for the schools. Currently many of the schools rely on either short-term grants or government programs to cover many of their costs. This creates numerous problems. The first, of course, is the continuing need to do

fundraising which adds to the workloai and overhead in running a school. The second is the problem of maintaining staff when salaries cannot be guaranteed or when as with VISTA and CETA, the funding programs are designed to fund staff for only a year or two.

The second conclusion is the need for schools to diversify their funding as much as possible so as to not be dependent too heavily on a single source of funds. Schools that depend only on tuition or on a single government funding source can be thrown into chaos when that source is ended through cutbacks or students leaving. Here again government funding through a voucher system or other means would serve as a good way to diversify the funding bases available to the schools and serve as a margin of safety for the tuition based schools.

ADMINSTRATIVE LEGAL STATUS

Analyzing or defining the administration of Alternative Schools is far more complicated than looking at the adminstration of a public school. In traditional schools people are assigned roles as teacher, students, parents and administration. Traditional school structures are fairly standardized , and hierarchial. Administrators in public schools are always a role in themselves.

Alternative Schools on the other hand reject the traditional role structure. 18 of the schools have no staff member hired specifically to be administrators. Likewise it is not uncommon for parents to be teaching , for students to sit on the Board of Directors, and for the principal to also be the janitor. Even in schools in which people have traditional jobs descriptions, as administrator and teacher the style in which there roles are played out is such that it breaks down the traditional formal barrier between administrators, teachers, parents and students.

To analyze the administration of the Network alternative schools, its best to look at administration as 2 components. 1.) a decision making process by which major decisions are made in regard to the direction the

school might take. 2.) The doing of the actual work (bookkeeping , fund-raising, curriculum , etc.) to carry out those decisions. Basically there are 3 patterns for school administrators (with mixture and overlap between them) to take. The three main designs are parent-run , staff-run, staff-board.

a.) the first is parent administered schools found in 12 schools. Parent-run schools generally rely on the parents for basic policy decisions, hiring and firing of staff, and unless there are administrators hired for the purpose, some day to day administrative work such as doing the books, and keeping track of tuition payments. In every parent-run school teachers have a good deal of autonomy within their classrooms,and usually share with parents the responsibility for plans and basic decisions. Parent-run schools generally also have some amount of parent involvement in the classroom, which is important not only for support to the teachers and their children, but also because in that way accountability is built in. Everyone knows what's going on.

Foundation Free School in Oak Park is a good example of how parent-run schools work. Parents and Teachers make up the board with one vote per person. They make the major decisions for the school. In addition kids and teachers meet every morning and afternoons. At these meetings, kids and teachers each have a vote and day by day decisions are made in relationship to field trips, curriculum, and classroom problems.

Parents often help with some of the teaching and field trips. They do the fundraising and student recruitement for the school , pitch in on building maintenance and other chores. Teachers do administrative work for schools, maintain records, design curriculum materials,-go to most organizational meetings, etc. This decision making and administrative work is shared across all levels of the school community and there is no clearly defined "administrator".

b.) Sixteen (16) of the schools are officially administered by their staffs. These are schools that were started either by staff, or by staff in

conjunction with community people who gave them encouragement and support. Parents often play an advisory role. Being totally responsible for all phases of a school, including teaching, fundraising and administrating is no easy task.

Staff-run schools give a sense of determination and confidence in what they are doing and their ability to pull through that is not always present in other schools. This could be for a variety of reasons: they are relatively small (averaging 37 students); they have a low turnover in staff (10 of the 11 schools still have some or all of their original staff); they have maintained a clearer autonomy from the outside and therefore greater reliance on each other.

Joliet Children's School is a good example of a staff run school. Decision making is done entirely by the staff with 2 staff members working part time on administrative work. As Mark Woodwine explained "we found it doesn't work to invlove parents directly in the leadership of the school. They just fought with each other and had heated battles." The staff prepares a plan of what they want to do and show it to the parents for comment. They've found that their school works best that way.

c.) The remaining 16 schools are administrered by a community Board of Directors and by their staff. In these cases major policy /budget decisions (budget--hiring, firing,program emphasis, etc.) are made by the Board of Directors with the staff responsible for doing the day by day administrative work.

Board composition varies widely. It usually consists of staff (usually in a voting capacity though sometimes non-voting), parents, involved community people, and in the case of high schools, students.

Boards which include community people can give a kind of support and stability to the school not otherwise possible. At Ruiz Belvis Creative Education Center, Board members are people who are extremely active in the

school, sometimes teaching classes, or writing proposals; in general supervising the program. Board members also interact with each other in a range of community activities, such as a health clinic and a singing group. Through their experience with each other in the school and in the community, they have come to a clearer idea of what the school should be about. For instance, it used to be a requirement that all staff and Board members be Latino (the school is in a heavily Puerto Rican neighborhood). Through their activities, Board members came to see that they too were caught in some of the traps of racism of the society at leange, and that part of taking steps to eradicate that racism would be to change those racial/ethnic requirments.

In a somewhat different vein, the Board at Operation Impact has played a significant role in helping to develop a vocational training program. On the Board are various professional people in the community, including an architect and a wrecker. Out of this group has come a plan by which some students would learn the wrecking business by working with the wrecker. They would then sell plumbing and building material they salvaged from the wrecked buildings. Other students are learning draftsmanship with the architect. They are planning the rehabilitation of a building (hopefully there will be others) that they were given as a tax loss. With the materials salvaged by the wrecking group, or bought from the profits of the material they sell, a plumber, carpenter and electrician are donating time to teach students their trades.

Another type of Board is one which administrates the school from within 9 parent organizations. The Native American Committee's Educational Council is the group that runs their school. The Christian Action Ministry (CAM)'s Education Task Force similarly oversees CAM Academy and Bethel CAM. The Academy's director is accountable to the Education Task Force and to the Executive Director of CAM. While he has responsibility for the day to day operation of the school, he does not have much flexibility in using resources.

For instance, when money needs to be spent for supplies, a field trip, etc., a special request must be made, and a whole process gone through to get it. Similar financial hassles exist in Bethel CAM, Cabrini-Green Alternative H. S. and Garfield High School.

It is extremely difficult if not impossible to evaluate which of the three administrative patterns is most effective. Each has developed in its own situation and serves that situation with its own benefits and limitations. As can be expected a parent school adminstration would not probably be effective for a school that needed to administer several complex federal grants. Vice versa, the highly individualistic parents at the Parents School would not necessarily tolerate a formal community board.

As has also been seen, the administrative process for the school can change as the schools situation changes. Cabrini-Green is currently developing a community board to give more direction to the school and to hold the staff and Catholic Charities (the schools founder) more accountable to the community. Southern Schools is developing a board for fundraising purposes. Joliet Children's School has rejected having parent involvement in return for staff autonomy.

Perhaps the important factor that can be learned from these schools and indeed the administration of all the Network Schools is the importance of flexible and responsive administrative structures in alternative schools. The ability of the administrators, (parents, board, staff) to quickly modify the structure of the schools, decide on projects, go after funds, etc, is a key factor in the success and viability of these programs.

LEGAL STATUS

The legal and accreditation status of the schools has evolved both out of their goals, and the exigencies of their history.

In Illinois, anyone can start a school. The only legal requirement

concerning schooling are that children between the ages of seven and sixteen must attend public school, unless physically unable, lawfully employed, or "attending a private or parochial school where children are taught the branches of education taught to children of corresponding age and grade in the public schools, and where the instruction of the child is in the English language."[4] In addition, school building are supposed to meet local fire and building codes.

Twenty of the schools are either accredited by the County, licensed or officially "recognized" by the state, members of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, or accredited by another school or agency which is certified either by the state or North Central. Certification enables schools to get funding and services not otherwise available. With it, they are seen as legitimate and therefore more acceptable to the community and to other schools and agencies.

However, certification can bring restrictions and changes in program and independence. State Recognition requirements include: 1) the existence of the school for two years; 2) proof of compliance with Federal legislation on civil rights; 3) compliance with State standards on attendance and a general education curriculum; 4) proof that the building is safe, i.e. up to code; and 5) certification of all teachers.[5]

Because of these and other problems, some schools, such as the Evanston Free School, consider and reject trying to get certification. Others, dependent on state and federal funding for survival, really don't have the option. They must, on some level, be certified, licensed, or approved. Certified or not, the schools must conform to City Building Codes. City and County building codes are a cumbersome, nearly impossible set of rules. In fact it's a rare building (including public school buildings) that actually meet all the code requirements. It is difficult to find one in which to house a school, and often prohibitively expensive to remodel a building to conform to the codes. Schools have sometimes had to move yearly from one building to another as

inspectors and fire marshalls discover them. The Family Free School spent several of its first months of existence in court because someone had seen black smoke rising from the church in which they are located, and called the fire department. The fire inspector saw that they had young children and decided that they were an illegal day care center. In the next three months they were contacted sixteen times by city departments. Finally they went to court. The judge was not convinced they were a school (rather than a day care) until an expert witness testified that there were blackboards there, and it therefore "looked like a school."

Building codes have caused several schools to take a low profile in their communities in order not to draw attention to themselves. In the late 60's strict enforcement of the code was used by the Chicago police as a means to hustle Coop 2 and Parents School for their involvment in radical politics, Ultimately forcing Coop 2 out of existence. While the building codes are the major legal hassle facing alternative schools, the rest of the Illinois school laws are neutral enough to allow the schools to exist but not really beneficial to schools at all. Minor changes in the law could force more schools out of existence. As such the schools are aware of the need to monitor the Illinois Office of Education and the State Legislature (see part 2).

THE SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY

The schools are run by the people from the community most directly affected by them. Either students, teachers, parents, community people or a mixture of all four. How that community relates to the larger community of the neighborhood central city is an extremely complex question. The schools community relations range from doing "invisible" (covertly running the school-hiding the school from the community) to being a focal point for community activisim and social change. This type of data is difficult to quantify.

Schools relationships with their communities can be changed from year to year. The main factors behind the style of the schools community relationships however can be easily described.

1) Legal Status. A major determinent of the school's visisiblity in the community is the legality of its building vis/à/vis the building code. A school that out of necessity must operate in a space defined as illegal by the City codes is not going to attract any attention, good or bad, to itself in its community.

2) The way the schools define themselves central to the way the schools relate to their communities is how the schools define their goals, The polititai, and philosophical opinions of the people who run the schools are the major factors in determining its relationship to the actual community.

Some schools place the education of their students as their main and only goal. A good example of this type of school is Southern School. Visistation by people outside the school is discouraged. The school is not invovled in outside community affairs. The only interface between the school and the community is fundraising and publicity related to fundraising.

At the other end of the spectrum is Rafael Cancel Miranda High School based in the Puerto Rican Community in West Town. The school sees its existence and the education of its students as being an extension of the struggles of the Puerto Rican Community to control their lives. Rafael Cancel Miranda is more than a school, it is a center for community activities. It's students and staff are involved in community struggle and issues ranging from Puerto Rican Indpendence to community control over the local public schools. The school building is open to the community and in use every day.

As can be seen from these two examples, a key factor in community-school relations is the schools central philosophy and how they define their relationship with the community.

3) Community's identification with the schools. Another major factor

in school community relations is whether or not the community identifies with the people in the school.

A good example is Chrysalis II a new branch of Chrysalis, a girls Alternative High School in Uptown. When Chrysalis decided to open a second school they rented a building in a predominantely upper middle class area of Lincoln Park on the North Side. The people on the block saw Chrysalis as an outsider. They had had problems before with drugs, hotlines and clinics using the building. The community typed the Chrysalis students as dropouts and troublemakers. (The schools is predominantely working class and middle class students.) and they proceeded to use building code violations as a means of evicting Chrysalis.

The community also can respond negatively to the kind of students that go to a school. The special education students that go to Council School are picked up and driven to and from school by a state-funded bus whose side panel announces loud and clear that the children riding it are "different." So their neighbors all know, and sometimes other children in the neighborhood give them a hard time.

Schools that primarily take in former drop-outs and push-outs are sometimes the recipients of hostility and fear on the part of community members who see these as "bad kids" or "hoodlums". Creative Education Center has started an evening G. E. D.program for veterans in the community, primarily to combat this image, to get community people into the school and break down those stereotypes.

On the other hand when the community identifies with a school it will support it in many ways.

Garfield Alternative, is located in the midst of a housing project in which there is a high drop-out rate, and a low level of hope. The community is highly appreciative of the job the school is doing, and of the fact that numbers of young people are getting a chance to finish school who would other-

wise probably be on the streets and in trouble. Likewise many of the Hyde Park area schools are run by liberal middle class parents and the schools are viewed favorably by the liberal middle class people in the neighborhood who also will support the schools through fundraising etc.

4) The type of building a school is located in can help determine its interaction with the community. The size and layout of some schools enables them to invite the community in to school functions, and make the space available for other activities. The DuPage Community School is using a rather large building donated by a church across the street which wanted it to be of use to the community. The school is now starting up a coffeehouse on the weekends.

Rafael Cancel Miranda pays an enormous rent for a large building because integration of the school with the activities and needs of the community is of major importance to them. Students and their friends are often at the Creative Education Center from 9 in the morning until 9 at night. Its a place they are comfortable in. During their spring vacation this year, students stayed away only one day, and then were at the school just as much as they are when it is in session. On the other hand, half or more of the schools have neither the space or the physical set-up that enables such use, even when desired.

The above are the major factors that determine the relationship between a school and it surrounding community. An important part of this relationship is the additional services the schools brings to their community.

At Operation Impact a staff person is at the school and available 24 hours a day to help students and others in crises of whatever kind. "Things don't happen to people just between 9 and 3," says director Tom Webb. Hazel Hudson, the director of Bethel CAM, has become known in the community as someone people can turn to and trust. She gets calls all the time for advice, or just to lend an ear to someone needing to talk. She also refers people to other

agencies that might be able to help them. In addition, Bethel CAM provides baskets of food to families in the community at Thanksgiving and Christmas. They are aided by people in various churches wanting to "help the needy." Similarly, the Native American Committee receives clothing donated by a group called "Adopt-A-School," which is then distributed among families in and out of the school. The workshops that the Learning Network runs as part of their H.E.W. contract are open to parents and teachers from other schools in the community. They have had P.E.T. (Parent Effectiveness Training) courses and T.E.T. (for teachers) to help with techniques parents and teachers can use with children in various situations.

That kind of visibility in the community is an important factor in its acceptanee and support of a school. As opposed to the public school teachers in the area who have left school by 3:30 at the latest, St. Mary's After School Program has found that the public presence of their staff both during and after hours has contributed to the affection and respect with which they are viewed by people in the community. People on the streets know them. When they have events such as art shows and concerts, the community shows up. In addition, the staff has gotten involved in community issues affecting others than their own students. One time a group of sixty neighborhood children were arrested for receiving stolen property after someone dumped a load of "hot" candy on them. The school staff got the children legal help and stood by them throughout the process.

The Lakeview Schools Coalition is well known in its community, and has been supported by the business community with donations and free xeroxing. The Coalition also has good relations with the local public schools. All sorts of public school personnel, from the district superintendent to principles, teachers and social workers, have come to visit the school. They have been impressed and supportive. This has also been true of CAM Academy's relations with public schools. The Coalition and the Academy are both consciously set

up as models, attempting to impact the public schools.

Many of the other alternative schools have relationships with public schools in some form. Often, referrals for students come from public school principals, counselors or social workers. B.U.I.L.D. Institute has arranged with the schools from which their students come for the students to get that school's diploma, and be able to graduate with their class. In one case at least, the local public school principal has been so eager to have some of their students taken on by an alternative school that he has been willing to make small deals, such as arranging for bus passes, gym facilities, drivers education.

Not all the inter-school relationships are positive. St. Mary's After School Program has trouble getting to see the principal or teachers of the children who come to them from local school, even though they are providing additional, rather than competititve, services for the students. DuPage Community School has had trouble getting meetings with public school counselors also, and recently the public schools have changed their policy of accepting the credits of their students who choose to return to public school. If not actively helpful and interested, however, most public/alternative school relationships have been neutral, non-competitive, and non-interfering.

The use of other institutions in the community is an integral part of the program for many of the schools. Libraries, museums and workplaces are used as extensions of the school through field trips, independent study, and apprenticeships. Gyms, parks and YMCA's are used as additional space for physical exercise and for fun. The schools also make abundant use of the human resources of a community, going to people in agencies and social services for help and consultation, as well as bringing people into the school in either temporary or on-going ways.

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PARENT RUN	STAFF	STAFF & STUDENTS	STAFF & BOARD	STAFF & EXTERIOR BOARD
ANCONA	B.U.I.L.D.		BENJAMIN BANNAKER	BETHEL CAM
ST. FRANCIS CABRINI	COUNCIL SCHOOL		RUIZ BELVIS CULTURAL C.	CABRINI-GREEN
COOP #3	JOLIET CHILDREN'S S.		DANIEL HALE WILLIAMS S.	CAM ACADEMY
COOP #3 KINDGERGARTEN	LAKEVIEW ACADEMY		NATIVE AMERICAN COMMITTEE	GARFIELD ALTERNATIVE H.S
COOP MIDDLE SCHOOL	LAKEVIEW COMMUNITY S.		OPERATION IMPACT	
DUPAGE COMMUNITY S.	LEARNING NETWORK		RAFAEL CANCEL MIRANDA H.S.	
EVANSTON FREE SCHOOL	LATINO YOUTH		ST. MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL	
FAMILY FREE SCHOOL	PEOPLE'S FOUNDATION		ST. MARY'S AFTER SCHOOL PRO.	
FOUNDATION CENTER	ROGERS PARK SCHOOL		ST. MARY'S ADULT LEARNING S.	
PARENTS SCHOOL	SOUTHERN SCHOOL		SULLIVAN HOUSE	
PARENTS S. NURSERY	WOODLAWN PREP		CHRYSALIS	
PHOENIX			PROLOGUE	
				curriculum and proceedure made at lower level
46				major economic decisions made at high level. 47

PROGRAM

The Programs and curriculum of the schools are as varied as the Schools themselves. The programs will vary depending on the type of students involved, the background of their teachers, the available resources and the goals of the schools program. As the following two examples show this results in a wide range of programs.

Operation Impact is a program that works with high school dropouts and wards of the state from Chicago's South Side ghetto. The program centers on giving these students whose lives are often in complete chaos due to police problems, broken homes, etc, basic vocational and literary skills that will help them survive on their own in society. As such , the program emphasizes learning to get to work or school on time, learning how to take direction, and other job related tasks. It does this through vocational apprenticeships. During the first week of a student's apprenticeship program, staff members of Operation Impact go to his house to get him up in time for work. The second week the student is called in the morning to make sure he's up. The third week he's on his own.

On the other hand Parent School Primary stresses the freedom of their studdnts (age 6-14) to pursue their own interests. School events and projects are for the most part entirely voluntary. Students move from learning area to learning area and the program is extremely unstructured.

The Schools in the Network run the entire gamut from the structured approach of Operation Impact to the completely unstructured open approach of Parents School. Despite their differences the schools do have several things in common. The first is a small class size, hardly ever more than 14 students/ teacher, usually more in the range of 8-12 students per teacher. This enables the school to pay a large amount of individual attention to each student. Secondly, even the most structured programs have a flexibility in their programming that is almost never found in public schools. Programs are easily modified to meet

student needs. When necessary additional resources are found to help the student out in other ways. This often includes finding a source for decent clothing and food and often aiding families in their battles with social service agencies or welfare.

For example, a 9 year old child came to St. Mary's After School Program who had been expelled from public school on account of mutiple behavioral and emotional problems. At the time he was expelled, his mother was an addict and unable to cope. Thought he wasn't retarded, he was put in a school for retarded children. When that school discovered he had normal intellignece, he was kicked out of there too. Meanwhile he had been coming to the After School Program. Staff there tried to get him psychiatric treatment through a hospital, but the hospital wouldn't take any more public aid recipients. So the staff let him spend his days in the school building while the high school was in session. As he hung around the school he began to pick up some interest in learning. Finally the staff found an appropriate program for him in another school. He is reported to be doing fine, with no discipline or behavior problems of note; he just wantsto read all day.

The key to the schools programming is their ability to make decisions concerning goals, curriculum materials and program structure entirely at the local level. This enables them to be flexible and to respond to the needs of the students they're serving. In many cases schools will add field trips, begin new curriculum area, or start special projects on less than a day's notice. The students will mention an idea in the morning and by evening it will be in operation. This kind of flexibility and local control is the main source for the success and the diversity of programs offered by the schools in the Network.

The way decision making or curriculum programming is done varies from school to school. In some cases control lies at the teacher level. Individual or groups of teachers make up the program and select the materials to meet the

needs of their students.

In many schools,however, the decisions on day by day programing involves students, teachers and even parents. Particularly in the elementary schools, both the structure and content of curriculum may be responsive to parent request. At the Lakeview Schools Coalition, goal setting and evaluation for children is based on parent-teacher discussions which parents request. This develops best when the parent spends time in the classroom, observing the child's environment, and what she/he has been doing. At Phoenix School, parents meet with teachers in curriculum committees during the summer to develop curriculum content for the following year.

Student input usually comes in the form of school meetings in which students and teacher discuss the problems of the school and ideas. This is usually a weekly (or daily) whole-school meeting in which plans are made and discussed, tasks assigned, gripes aired, and problems solved. It is a time in which students and staff jointly set the tone and direction for the school's activities. At DuPage Community School the meeting is on Monday morning, and is followed by a lunch that everyone helps make. At Family Free School, its on Tuesday afternoons, is chaired by students and the teachers make popcorn.

Student input at these meetings is considerable. Often they work on a one vote per person basis with the students and teachers treated as equals. Students make suggestions on curriculum, ideas and program areas. This often includes suggestions for more structured courses in basic skills.

At Coop #3, a linguistic spelling group was instituted by student demand. At Evanston Free School this year, students at first requested esoteric, exotic courses, but discovered that they didn't know how to read all the fancy words, and finally asked that courses deal instead with basics.

In the high schools oriented towards initiative and decision

making, the courses to be taught are either solely or largely determined by student request. Courses include a wide specturm of subjects, both traditional and uniquely designed, and students can either concentrate their efforts along particular lines of interest, or develop a broader, more encompassing program. At Chrysalis, a course schedule is worked out at the beginning of each semester by students throwing out ideas of what they would like to study, then winnowing down the list (usually about 150 ideas) by combination and elimination, until they have about 50 courses that no less than four people want to take. These courses then make up the schedule.

DuPage Community School goes through a similar process, but there, community people come to the school at the beginning of each sememster and tell students what they'd like to teach. At both schools (as well as at almost all the high schools giving diplomas), an advisor/counselor helps to ensure that students will take whatever courses are necessary to graduate. Experience outside the school, in volunteer or paid work, can sometimes be counted as credit. Students can also take courses through the city colleges (particularly in language).

Work is highly individualized in these schools, but interaction in groups is also important.

EVALUATION

Important also for self-esteem is success. Relationships with students, teaching methods and program design are aimed at helping students achieve it. So also does the evaluation of students, teachers and program try to ensure that the school is meeting the needs of students in a constructive way. Evaluation, from informal observation to more formal testing, is used primarily as a diagnostic tool, as a record of the student's experience, and as a basis for continuing or re-designing the program. The major difficulty, regardless of the type of evaluation, is defining what it is that the student,

or teacher, or school as a whole, should be accomplishing. Cabrini Learning Center is using (and Ancona is now in the process of developing) curriculum guides that are produced by staff committees to ensure an overall consistency of expectations and skills, particularly important in a school with totally individualized instruction. Joliet Childrens' School gives standardized tests to determine what the student's potential is, and then expects and helps him/her work up to it.

There is a strong sense of accountability to parents in the alternative schools, and most have parent conferences at least twice a year. There is generally much more interaction than that, however, At Operation Impact, all staff members make four home visits a month, and at B.U.I.L.D. there are home visits every other week. Woodlawn Prep requires parents to visit the school each quarter as a condition of their child's acceptance. Parents School also believes in parent accountability. Teachers last year did evaluations of the parents.

Forms of evaluation are as diverse as all other aspects of school operations. Almost all the schools use a good deal of informal observation, anecdotal record-keeping, and staff discussion. In some schools, students make contracts, and help evaluate themselves. They also may be required to keep their own record of the work they do. Probably three-fourths of the schools use some kind of standardized tests, though they are often used only at the beginning of the year for diagnostic and placement purposes. Schools also make up their own tests. After each unit of work (about two week's worth) at CAM Academy, students are tested before they can go on to the next unit. Each test has three forms, each worded differently, so that if a student can't pass it the first time, she/he can try it again.

Staff believe, particularly in schools serving drop-outs and others who have usually lacked success, that it is important to avoid letting a student get into a syndrome of falling behind and withdrawing from the work. Teachers

at CAM get together every two weeks to evaluate the progress of each student. If anyone is having any trouble, she/he is approached by one of the staff and the basis for it explored and support given, whether it be trouble at home, too difficult work, or health problems. Garfield Alternative has weekly (sometimes daily) reports made up on students. In addition, grades are given out each term (at the request of the students). Instead of grades, most schools generally have long, written evaluation forms or conferences. There is also an emphasis on immediate feedback on work and help is usually provided until the student can finish the work correctly. There is therefore very little failure. At Rafael Cancel Miranda, evaluation is interactive; both students and teachers attempt through honest and open discussion to ensure that they all keep working towards the school's objectives. Such sessions may include student criticism of a teacher's arrongance, or of another student for being lazy.

Some people feel that the need to be aware of what students are doing has to be balanced with being able to maintain creative input into the program. Barney Swett, the teacher at the Lakeview Schools Coalition, has tried various forms of record keeping and evaluation, but also feels that there is an "accountability paranoia" abounding in American schools, perhaps deriving from a Western mind-set that is fascinated with statistics and proof. Constant record-keeping is time-consuming, and"possibly violates what you are trying to do in the school". Teachers at Coop #3 have found that they are quite able to keep a record of students progress in their heads, and that parents are more interested in their general observations over time than in daily notes or charts. They do, however, give yearly achievement tests for added assurance. Perhaps the degree of importance testing and record-keeping has for a school varies with their dependence on outside fundingand their students' need for observable success.

Teachers are evaluated primarily by the school's administrators or

Board. This can either be an informal, on-going process, or a formal, yearly event. At Garfield Alternative, Students do periodic evaulations of teachers, as do students in St. Mary's After School Program.

School programs as a whole are evaluated on an ongoing basis in staff, parent and board meetings. In addition, schools that are funded by outside agencies are required to submit reports regularly and/or be periodically evaluated through visits and observation. H.E.W. evaluators visit the Learning Network and the Native American Committee school several times a year to check on the progress of their programs, to give suggestions, and lend support. The Department of Children and Family Services sends observers periodically as well as requiring lengthy and detailed reports each month.

The criteria for success on which an agency's evaluation is based relates to those elements of the school's program for which it is being funded. Generally it is quantifiable data that is important to them, such as days in attendance and test scores. For themselves, and their own evaluation of the progress and success of their work, schools use more diverse criteria, partially based on observation over time of students ' behavior, attitutdes, self-concept.

One of the more obvious measures of change and success is the lack of violence in the schools, and the absence of vandalism. Since students come to the schools because they choose to, and because they have genuine avenues for expression of feeling, there is no need for acting out in what is often their only recourse in other situations. Students really feel they "own the place". Also partly because they come by choice, students come. Not everyone, and not all the time; but attendance rates in the alternative schools, especially in comparison with the attendance histories of their particular students, are high. And often more come than the school can handle. Sixty percent of the schools are at their capacity enrollment, and either have a waiting list, or help students find another placement. Two weeks after Chrysalis

opened in September last year, there was a waiting list of fifteen students, and they began thinking about opening another school. They continued thinking about it, and have now found a building and are hiring staff for the new school, which will open this September. Another sign of a school's stability and success is whether or not students and staff stay once they get there.

In thirty-one of the thirty-nine schools, one or more of the people involved in starting the school are still involved in it. Since many of the schools are only three or four years old, it's difficult to make a lot out of that statistic, except as one considers the arduousness of the job, and the importance staff people themselves place on the sense of continuity and identity so derived. As they begin to see that the school really is different, students stay longer too, not only for the years of the program, but after school hours, and sometimes on weekends. Many relate back to the school for some time after they've left it, calling or visiting periodically. At Creative Education, two ex-students are on the Board, and others have been active in helping raise money for the school.

Sometimes this tenacity is in itself something of a problem. Lem Ezurike at CAM talks about both the positives and the negatives of the school being a secureand pleasant place. The school can become its own world in which students are appreciated, function independently, and can see the intrinsic benefits of learning; but this can make it ingrown, and hard to leave when its time to go on. However, as Karen Herman at Coop #3 reasons, even if children face a world in which independent thought, self-confidence and lack of submissiveness are not appreciated or given room, having a positive experience can only really strengthen them, and "plant in their minds that there are options."

Other indications of success include changed patterns of trouble with the law, and changes from more or less constant hostility to cooperation and even eagerness to learn. Southern School has found that students generally

stop getting in legal trouble after about a year at the school. During the first year they work through a lot of the underlying mental health, drug and family problems that are at all within their control.

Actually getting a diploma and graduating from high school is a major life achievement for many people. Students who are graduating from Prologue this year are the first, not only in their generation, but in the whole history of their families, to graduate from high school. The people who started Woodlawn Prep were not even concerned at first about students graduating. They were just trying to give them a chance to learn. But students wanted proof of their achievements, including grades. Now their many graduates are in colleges all over the country. Drop-outs who came to Woodlawn Prep with fourth and sixth grade reading scores are on Dean's Lists at the University of Illinois Chicago Circle Campus, Loyola and elsewhere.

Not all students at alternative schools are successful; nor are all the schools. Two of the schools that were in operation this year, will be closed next fall. The reasons behind their dissolution are typical of the difficulties faced by alternative schools.

St. Mary's Center for Learning has been in existence as an alternative program since 1968. It has been housed in a hugh old parochial school building that is badly in need of repairs. Though rent is only $1.00 per year, the yearly costs for maintenance are at least $140,000.00. This year the boiler broke down, and the repairs cost an extra $18,000.00.The school has been in financial difficulty before and parents and community members have worked hard to keep it going. Staff have quite often worked without pay.

But this year has been the last straw. A major grant ended that covered a large % of the school costs;because of this they had to raise tuition to $750.00 for the year, which many students couldn't afford, and left. Since the budget was based on a higher enrollment, it has been a struggle to squeak through to the end. A few weeks before the school year ended, it was decided

that St. Mary's could not realistically re-open in September. However, two other programs that have been housed in the building, the After School Program and the Adult Night School have each found other homes for next year and will continue.

Just as a scientific experiment may not work, with the results not being a failure but an event to learn from, a school may close because the chemistry and circumstances of the people involved are the wrong ingredients for the concoction they are trying to create. The Coop Middle School was started by parents who had had their children in other parent-run elementary schools, and did not want to send them to conventional junior high schools when they grew too old to continue where they were. So they planned a school which was to have two teachers and twenty children, emphasizing student choice, apprenticeship work experiences, and "exciting learning".

The school got off to a shaky start because parents wereunable to recruit enough students to pay more than one teacher. The tuition was high ($1,000.00) and students seemed by the seventh grade to have found other schools that were at least tolerable, and weren't willing to leave them and their friends. The teacher wanted the students to determine and pursue their own interests. But, being pre-adolescents, the interets they mostly pursued were social.

Parents had deep differences among themselves as to appropriate expectations and goals for their children. Some of them appreciated and approved of the experience their children were getting; others felt the classroom lacked adequate stimulation and excitement. The teacher was not prepared by herself to offer in-depth learning experiences over the whole range of academic subjects, and parents were not willing to put in the time to raise money to hire someone else. This year they were able to get a CETA position for a part-time teacher, which has made some difference , though not enough.

But in this school, it was primarily the differences in outlook and expectation among the parents, rather than inadequate funds, that led to

dissolution. The whole process has also brought into question the feasibility of an open-classroom shoestring-budgeted junior high school. Students that age may need more broad and sophisticated learning experiences, and more students to interact with, than were available to them in this program. But the experience points also to an underlying characteristic of alternative schools; that they are created and maintained, not to serve someone's career plans, or out of inertia or the dictates of bureaucracy, but when , and only if, they meet the needs of the community and students they attempt to serve.

Perhaps the best and only means of evaluating the schools that is currently available is that they keep open year after year despite the hardships they face. Unlike the public schools , the alternative schools have no means of forcing students to enroll. The students are there because the school meets a need in their lives. The fact the schools continue to attract students after student who have not regularly gone to school for years is a good testimony to their effectiveness as schools and the best means possible to evaluate their program.

PART II

THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS NETWORK

A history of the Alternative Schools Network does not stretch back very far; the ASN was only three years old on June 2, 1976. Its true origins, however, preceded that earliest organizational formation. A review of those origins is necessary in order to understand the make-up and functioning of the ASN today, for the ASN grew without blueprints or models and what it is today derives in large part from the needs, difficulties and opportunities that confronted alternative schools and the people in them at its inception. Indeed, though there has been fundamental change and growth in the organization, it still faces many of those same challenges. Further, a look at the history of the ASN makes possible an understanding of the necessary conditions for its development as an organization and thus its potential as a model or lesson for other such organizations elsewhere.

PRE-ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The establishment of alternative schools in Chicago in the 60's can be seen as an energetic attempt to create autonomous, individualized institutions. This was true whether the school was a "free" or "freedom" school. All available timeand resources went into the school; survival was all. For the "free" schools this meant survival of the school as an entity; for the "freedom" schools it meant this and more-- the survival of each student, the survival of a people, were at stake.

A tremendous amount of energy was necessary to start and maintain these earliest alternative schools. The schools were initiated and staffed by a devoted group of people who spent a vast amount of time and energy making the schools "work." Little time was left for communicating with those outside the school; thus most of the schools were isolated from one another and from the larger community.

Ironically, many of these same schools had received their start as

the result of community meetings called to discuss problems within the public schools. These were open,public meetings attended by a broad cross-section of the community. Only later, when the goal became specific-- to start an alternative school-- did groups become smaller and singleminded in intent and activity.

These original school-starters, working in relative isolation did not perceive their efforts as part of a movement. It was not until the late 60's and early 70's that such a concept began to emerge. Thus, it was that in 1969 George Dennison wrote, "One hears more frequently now of parents banding together, finding teachers, and starting little schools... There are no signs that a movement exists, but here are many signs that one might."6 And two years later Jack Spicer wrote in the second issue of New School News, "We know that parents can run a school at least as well as state-employed edminis-strators, that many people who have not been certified by the state can be excellent teachers, that space and supplies can be had at a cost far less than that paid by the state, and that children not only can be happier but can also learn more easily in "new schools" than in public school. A few years ago those were only hunches and hopes."

It was this shared sense of accomplishement in the context of a decade of "movements" that provided the setting in which these formerly isolated schools could come together. However, this recognition of mutual achievements alone would not have been sufficient to bring these independent schools together. It was becoming apparent to most of them that the struggle for existence and the search for operating funds was to be a permanent problem.

Also , as the schools became better known and began to achieve recognition, they fell under the scrutiny of public officials. Local building code inspectors, fire department officials,and social workers from the Department of Children and Family Services, among others, soon descended upon the schools with a variety of demands and restrictions. The recognition of the possible

advantages of a unified strategy for dealing with outside agencies, shared problem-solving, and joint fundraising were significant factors in bringing about cooperative efforts among the schools.

CAM Academy, started in 1965, was one of the first schools to see the advantages of uniting with other schools for their mutual benefit. In November, 1968, they held a national conference, "Crisis in Education", attended by several Chicago-based institutions and many more schools from across the nation. It served to bring some Chicago schools together and to establish the beginning of a communications network. It also provided a forum for the public discussion of issues which continue to be of vital importance today. The two different thrusts within the alternative schools movement--the "free" and "freedom" philosophies-- were hotly debated. Mary Nelson, a planner of that conference, believes that the tension between these two philosophies, "though not quite as apparent, is still there today."

From 1968 on, the number of groups meeting about alternative schools-- to start programs within the public schools, to plan new schools-- increased rapidly. It would be impossible in this report to list all these groups. They can be characterized as manifesting a high degree of interest in the notion of alternative education and en enthusiasm for involvement in the "alternative schools movement."

The number of groups called together to form coalitions of schools was also surprisingly large. Again, it would be impossible to itemize all the attempst at "networking " that took place. Several of these efforts cut across class and race lines (such as the Chicago Coalition of Alternative and Irregular Schools which held an Institute on Cooperative Education at Columbia College in 1969). Others were organized to serve the needs of a specific inner-city community(such as the un-named coalition of west side schools organized by CAM, Presentation, Provident-St. Mels, and St. Phillips

or the group of south and west side schools, RESCUE,organized a year later). Never again, after that conference in Racine in 1969 did the tensions between the two strands of the "movement" surface in a public fashion. However, though CAM continued to be involved in almost every attempted school coalition, from 1968 on, many of the Chicago inner-city schools chose to become involved only in small, unpublicized, homogeneous coalitions.

In 1971 in response to the burgeoning interest in alternative education, the Education Program of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and several college students drew up a list of alternative schools and program in the Chicago area. This list, later to be known as"The Directory of Alternative Schools" appeared in the first issue of New School News, published under the auspices of the AFSC. Twenty four schools were listed in the directory.

New School News (NSN) was issued approximately every two months, providing news items of interest to those in alternative schools, and also providing a vehicle through which alternative school people could communicate with each other. Staff of NSN convened several social events which also served to bring those involved in alternative schools together. Although it was never its intention to do so, the Service Committee found itself working most closely with the middle-class "free" schools. This happened, in part, because these were the schools which made use of the services offered by the AFSC, and in part, because the staff was more sympathetic to the educational philosophy of the "free" schools.

In late 1971 and early '72 a series of meetings was held to discuss a Federation of Alternative Schools. These meetings were initiated by three Hyde Park parent-run schools, with involvement by the Oak Park Free School,, New Community School, and New School News. Though some resistance was voiced to the idea of a federation, the advantages of united effort seemed significant enough to warrant further discussion.

There were several reasons for federating. In an informational letter,

Bob Denham of the Hyde Park-Kenwood Alternate School itemized them: "....a co-operative effort would be more likely to meet success in approaching foundations and financial support..the need for some kind of formal organization which would serve to bring (them) together for sharing ideas and concerns...a federation could provide a power base for dealing with such things as community opposition and harassment from city boards and inspectors..."

Like the several coalitions that had gone before it, the "Federation" never became a viable organization. A common reason for failure was that those involved in trying to start the organization were heavily involved in and committed to their own schools and could not afford to spend time on the "Federation," "consortium," or "coalition". In addition there were reasons peculiar to the federation which militated against its success. Two of the involved schools were having severe financial problems; one closed at the end of that year, the other, one year later. Their expectations of obtaining foundation funding must have been dashed when the Inner City Fund of Urban Dynamics decided not to make any more grants to alternative schools, but rather to put their resources into parent-organizing efforts that would affect the public schools. Peter Hunt, then of the Inner City Fund, recalled recently that the decision was made , in part, because of the many monetary requests the Fund received from small, middle-class schools.

The inner-city schools themselves were hardly sympathetic to the financial plight of the middle class schools at this time. Struggling to stay alive, they saw themselves in competition for funds with the middle class schools that had a funding base not available to them. Even though this tension did not surface at this time, and was certainly not the reason for the demise of the Federation, it is possible that more input by inner-city schools might have made the Federation a more viable organization.

A little more than one year after the last of the Federation meetings, the AFSC sponsored a Festival of Educational Alternatives. NSN staff described

the Festival as a "celebration of the richness of our diversity and a verification of our ability to share resources and ideas." [7] They anticipated that "many communications networks will form as a result of the Festival. Perhaps some will be co-ordinated through NSN, but we assume that most of the networks will need no outside agency to keep them going; common goals and needs and the recognition of the advantages of mutual help might be enough to keep individuals and groups of people in touch with each other."

Over 800 people attended the May 1973 Festival and participated in the more than 50 workshops, films, and exhibits. A workshop on a "Federation: How Can Alternative Schools Cooperate?" was held on the first day of the Festival. Approximately twenty people representing 10-12 schools attended the workshop. Several people not affiliated with any alternative schools also attended the Federation workshop. Mark Themnes, from the Youth Network Council, and his associate Jack Wuest, from the Department of Children and Family Services were there. At that seminal meeting they were instrumental in channeling the sentiments for an organization of alternative schools into a working plan.

Those participating were excited about the prospect of a new "Network" of alternative schools. A second meeting was scheduled at the AFSC for the following month. Notices of the meeting were posted in workshop and exhibition rooms at the Festival and the idea of a Network was discussed informally during the rest of that day and the following day of the Festival.

EARLY NETWORK ORGANIZATION

Two weeks after the festival workshop, representatives of fifteen schools met in a large room at AFSC. They included many of those present at the workshop, as well as others who had heard about the new organization in the interim. Participants took turns briefly describing their schools, explaining particular needs their schools had for such a group, and discussing some directions it might usefully take. Expressions of need and interest fell roughly into five

categories: 1) access to people who would serve as resources to schools, such as architects, lawyers, psychological consultants, accountants, and teachers of special skills such as photography, music, languages; 2) access to material resources, such as inexpensive or free classroom materials, buses., books; 3) funding--both immediate and long-term, including private and public grant sources, long-term legislative changes (i.e. vouchers), and one-shot schemes such as benefits, auctions and garage sales; 4) inter-school sharing of programs, resources and information; 5) informing the public about alternative schools.

It was felt that some sort of structure for the new organization would soon have to be developed. The first step, and a clear departure from the forms taken by the earlier federation attempts, was the designation of a coordinator and a recording secretary. Task forces to begin locating material and human resources and possibilities for funding were established. An additional task force was set up to discuss possible organizational forms and directions the Network might take, for even in the first meeting, it was clear that differences existed among the schools on issues of power and the determination of priorities for the new organization.

The task forces met between the monthly meetings, and from their work, and the announcements and reports of people attending, the meetings soon flowed with information, ideas, proposals, questions, arguments. Several different sources for free or discounted materials were located, workshops on accounting, writing funding proposals, teaching math were planned and held. Several funding leads later to become major sources of support for the schools (VISTA, Youth Creates, and the State's policy of paying tuition for handicapped students excluded from public schools), were discovered and pursued. The ASN participated in a car raffle organized by a southside parish. The Network earned its first income, $175.00, and the participating schools netted approximately $2,500.00

Through the monthly and task force meetings, connections and joint projects between schools were created. People and schools just starting out gained both moral support and solid help through contacts they made and information brought to meetings. Each month brought new people, including representatives or agencies and groups, college teachers and students interested in alternative education, as well as staff, parents and students of local alternative schools. People came because they wanted a broader context for the work they were doing, to get useful information, to find out how other schools solved certain problems they were having, to hear about legislation that might affect them, and to look for money.

Satisfaction was not universal. Some who came looking for money in a hurry were disappointed and didn't return. Others who came intermittently or even consistently just in order to stay in touch often felt too much time was spent on organizational problems. For still others, the nature and direction the Network itself was to take remained a fundamental and persistent issue.

Members from the middle-class, parent - run schools in particular were concerned that the Network might replicate some of the bureaucratic and hierarchical power relations that their schools had been consciously set up to avoid. They were not willing to allow an organization of the schools to operate on principles anti-thetical to their own. Their position took several forms. The very title--"network" rather than the earlier "federation" -- came from a sense of the looser ties and control it implied. Representatives of parent-run schools opposed the formation of a "steering committee" though later acquiesing to a "coordinating committee". It was felt that both power and responsibility should be equally accessible to everyone. The first official vote taken by participants (on whether or not to join the car raffle) was accompanied by a long debate on decision-making; several parent-run school representatives arguing (without success) for decisions to be made by consensus rather than by vote. More fundamentally, their vision of the Network was that

of a facilitator to a process of communcation, sharing and mutual support among the schools in which the schools themselves would take the initiative and do whatever work needed to be done. The parent-run schools which had survived to this point, were funded by relatively dependable parent tuition. They did not envision the Network as a separate entity from the schools which would act independently to provide funding and services. Nor did they forsee or accept the necessity for the ASN to have its own staff and office, or its own funding.

Though people from the parent-run schools were the most active (and vocal) in the first months of the new organization, they did not succeed in enacting their vision of a network. There were a number of reasons for this. A major one is the very nature of alternative schools; the heavy load and range of responsisibilities carried by each staff person, the immediate, priority demands brought by daily crises and threats to survival. People in schools were already so heavily committed to their own work that, as much as they wanted to , taking on major responsibility for the workings of another organization was simply not realistic or possible.

Perhaps a more important factor was that, though some schools seemed to have funding stability, other schools most desperately did not. Private foundation money was no longer going to inner city alternative schools--they were no longer new. Public sources were interested in having greater impact than the small number of students served by individual alternative schools. And the families of students in inner-city schools could not possibly afford to pay tuition that would cover school costs. People from these schools began to see the possibilities of an aggressive umbrella organization, able to speak for larger numbers of people, staffed by people outside the schools who were able to spend the time necessary to search out and pursue funding sources; an organization independently funded, with strong leadership and eventually, with clout.

To try to accomodate both visions, the task force organized to develop a workable structure for the Network proposed that the main work of

the organization be carried out by the various task forces and comittees. (This soon included a group interested in working on "public education"--meaning informing the public about alternative schools, as well as monitoring legislative action important to the schools). Representatives of these task forces plus elected officer and at-large members were to comprise a steering committee to oversee and coordinate the work of the task forces and staff. The role of the staff, the coordinator in particular, was left undefined. But it was the orientation and direction of work taken by that coordinator, Jack Wuest, that in reality moved the ASN to focus its energy on the concerns and positions taken by the inner-city schools.

At the time of the festival workshop and the first months of the ASN, Jack Wuest was working in the office of resource development in the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. As it happened, IDCFS was at that time headed by Jerome Miller, a believer in de-institutionalization and community-based programs. Wuests' job, vaguely defined, leant itself to his being able to work full-time on the ASN, an organization of community-based schools. Wuest had previously had some experience in organizing and had studied the methods used by Saul Alinsky in Chicago and elsewhere. He quotes Alinsky on the necessity of building an organization based on peoples' needs, on delivering services to meet those needs. "Moralizing won't work," he says. Wuest soon identified funding as the most potent and commonly felt need among the schools.

Wuest spent most of his time in the early months establishing communication with people in various agencies and organizations so that any information about future funding possibilities would be sure to come to him. He visited most if not all the schools showing interest in the Network and made sure that a mimeographed "minutes" of monthly meetings were sent to many more people than attended the meetings.

In those early months, Wuest shaped the course of his work in

the ASN in two ways that continue to have immense impact on the nature and direction of the ASN. One is his direct involvement in nearly every aspect of the organization's work. Wuest attends almost every meeting that relates at all to the ASN: task force and committee work; project boards; meetings with outside agencies. He writes or oversees the writing of most proposals for funding. He does the paperwork related to projects, including VISTA and CETA employment forms. There is nothing that goes on that he doesn't know about.

The other major direction Wuest has set has been to convince funding sources of the importance of the problems and needs faced by alternative schools by focusing on the "problem students" they often serve and the possibilities inner city schools have of preventing delinquency, drug use and other future drains on societal wealth. "You don't get money to work with healthy students," he explains.

Given all the attempts that had been made without success to join Chicago alternative schools into a working organization, the success and vitality of the ASN, even before it began attracting funding through projects and grants, is quite remarkable. The difference seems to derive from two circumstances; the variety of schools that were able to work together, and the availability of someone with organizing skill who was able to devote full time work to building the organization.

The path the Network has taken does not match the specific needs and goals originally posited by the parent-run schools, and they are, as a whole, not as active in it as they were at its inception. Nevertheless, the parent-run schools maintain their membership in and support of the ASN, believing that its ability to keep the schools in touch with each other and their wider context is valuable and worth preserving. The ASN, in fact, can be seen as something of a bridge between the "free" and "freedom" schools, and now when those labels are no longer appropriate, the schools are called, in common, "alternative."

By the end of 1974, it was clear that the time and effort put into

the ASN for the previous year and a half was about to pay off. The truancy and VISTA projects were about to go into operation. Funds for the Youth Creates project were promised. At the same time, Jack Wuest's job at DCFS was no longer enabling him to work full time on the ASN. In order to have him continue his work with the Network, and to ensure the full time staff presence necessary to handle the increased activity of the ASN, a proposal to fund the Network office and staff was presented to several foundations. In March of 1975 the proposals were accepted by the Chicago Community Trust and the Field Foundation. With this, the opening chapter in the Network's history was closed; it was now a full-fledged, autonomous organization. And though arguments over priorities and directions continued to reveal the diversity of viewpoints represented by Network schools, this new step to maturity was accepted without qualms or opposition.

STRUCTURE AND FUCTION OF THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS NETWORK

Today the ASN is an incorporated, not-for-profit organization with an annual budget of $54,600.00 and a full time staff of six. This office staff is the most visible part of the organization, and its efforts are often the most intense of the Network. It is easy to look at the organization with this office in the forefront, but it is more appropriate to maintain a perspective which allows a view of the full range of network activities. The Network's character is shaped by the membership's sense of ownership. The strength of the membership brought the Network into being and empowered a staff which has come to be equally strong.

We will distinguish between those activities converging from the schools, the decentralized aspects of the ASN, and those emanating from the office, the centralized aspects of the Network. This distinction is important, because although the membership is the Network, it is diverse, widespread, and its activities are less obvious. The member schools are autonomous (especially

as compared to schools in a public school district) and are under r
from the ASN.[8]

CENTRALIZED FUNCTION : STAFF AND OFFICE

The six staff members, the newsletter, and the telephor
the basis of the centralized aspect of the ASN. The office staff s
disseminates useful information from a flood of incoming mailings,
personal contacts. One product of the staff's efforts is the newsl
is sent monthly to five hundred people and schools. The newsletter
notice of the upcoming monthly meeting, announces other ASN meeting
meetings already held,and may contain a treasurer's report. Its ma
to let member schools know about funding leads, curriculum ideas, a
people might be interested in attending, and to let member schools
formation about projects or fundraising events one school has tried
which another might learn. Occasionally a longer article appears a
such as teacher unemployment compensation, parents and alternative
a school's discipline program, or politics and reading. Job openin

In addition, it would not be an exaggeration to say tha
cant element of this Network is the telephone, the four lines comin
office, busy much of the time with calls from individuals at member
the public, and from agencies with which the ASN deals. The office
public relations tasks for Network projects and alternative educati
but does not do public relations for individual schools beyong refe
ested parties to the schools themselves.

The office staff performs necessary administrative func
those which require full time attention or coordination. For insta
administer the VISTA project which provides non-teaching personnel
16 Network schools and the ASN office. Though VISTA volunteers are
locally recruited by the schools, all paperwork for hiring and payr

are handled by the office. Similarly, CETA workers, who make a major contribution to the schools as they are being further trained, are recruited at the local school level, but are hired and paid through the ASN office.

Network office staff is hired by the membership of the ASN on recommendation of the Board of Directors, which advertises, screens, and interviews. Current staff positions are Network Coordinator, Program Coordinator, Arts Coordinator, Truancy Project Director, Truancy Project Education Specialist, and Video Project Coordinator.

The official job description for the ASN Coordinator requires that he or she 1)coordinate and disseminate information; 2) serve as an enabler in fund raising for the Network and as a funding resource person for the ASN schools; 3) conduct legislative monitoring and research; 4) perform various administrative functions, such as working with the Board of Directors, supervising salaried personnel, initiating projects, helping new schools start, and assisting in evaluating the Network; 5) serve as an advocate for alternative education in relation to publicand private schools and before the public at large. The coordinator does perform all these functions. In addition she/he processes paperwork for the CETA program, serves on several boards and makes presentations at various meetings to publicize the ASN and to have an impact on the individuals and institutions that might affect alternative schools. Leadership for the May 1976 national convention on alternative education, "Education for Change," as well as the recent initiative to creat a national coalition of alternative schools came from Jack Wuest.

The Program Coordinator helps people looking for jobs in alternative schools and helps schools with job openings. He produces the newsletter, arranges for publicity, including writing public service announcements for radio and television, coordinates the distribution of resources the ASN has received (books, plywood, etc.). He makes reservations for the Network camping equipment and refers parents who call the ASN to appropriate alternative schools. He coordinates

public appearances and speaking engagements by Network members and staff. In addition he handles special short term projects that the Network Coordinator is too busy to work on such as, Education for Change Conference, The Network Resource Book, etc.

The Network enlarges itself by initiating new projects. Perhaps the most promising and creative arrangement for new activities exists when an individual with a particular skill and an idea to apply it in the schools finds funding for the idea and has the grant administered through the Network. Two such projects are the Illinois Arts Council Video Project and the Arts Project.

The Arts Coordinator supervises the distribution of art materials the ASN has received. She has particularly emphasized provision of volunteer and inexpensive personnel from the whole spectrum of the arts to as many schools as possible. In some respects her job resembles that of the Program Coordinator in that she works on the clearninghouse functions of the office--answering any of the many phone lines, and providing quick turnover of information among people who need it. She also runs the sports program.

The Video Project Coordinator works with students, collects videotapes for a library, and trains teachers in the use of video equipment. She has developed contacts throughout Chicago with people involved in a variety of Video projects.

The other two staff members administer the Truancy Program from the Network office. Their jobs will be described in the section on member-directed projects.

No staff positions are funded on a long term basis and each staff member is involved in annual refunding for his/her own program. Since each funded position is time limited, efforts are constantly underway to find other funding or renewed funding so that the programs can continue. The amount of time needed for this varies from project to project. The Central Network

operating costs (Network coordinator salary, office rent, etc.) has taken up little time from fundraising thanks to multi-year commitment by Chicago Community Trust and Field Foundation. The first two years of the Network were funded by writing a short single proposal each time --a minimal amount of time. On the other hand money is scarce for the Video project and Denise Zaccardi needs to spend a couple of days a month working on fundraising leads and proposals. In addition, most staff members participate in proposal writing for new projects.

DECENTRALIZED FUNCTIONS: MEMBERSHIP

Impulse for much of what occurs in the Network comes from the needs and interest of the membership. A list of member schools is on the next page. Member schools are the motivators and the beneficiaries of Network activity and maintain active leadership through the Board of Directors, committee membership, and involvement in projects. In addition, member schools interact with each other via monthly meetings, joint activities, and informal connections.

The membership consists of affiliated alternative schools, as represented by named delegates and alternatives, as well as a limited number (ten) of individual members, and a limited number (ten) of affiliated, non-school groups. Each member pays annual dues and is entitled to participate in ASN functions and programs and bears the responsibility of active involvement and support of the goals of the Network.

Regular monthly meetings of the membership are convened at a different school each month. The monthly meeting is the primary gathering where all the delegates and members can meet informally as well as participate in the more structured business meeting. The evening begins with a meal provided by the host school and paid for by the ASN. The business meeting includes a presentation about the host school and reports from committees and special projects. The main event of the evening is the presentation and discussion

NETWORK SCHOOL LIST AS OF OCTOBER '76.

ANCONA SCHOOL
AUSTIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
BENJAMIN BANNAKER SCHOOL
BETHEL CAM
B.U.I.L.D. INC.
CABRINI-GREEN HIGH SCHOOL
CABRINI LEARNING CENTER
CAM ACADEMY
CHRYSALIS SCHOOL
COOP KINDERGARTEN
COOP MIDDLE SCHOOL
COOP #3 SCHOOL
COUNCIL SCHOOL
DU PAGE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL
FAMILY FREE SCHOOL
FOUNDATION SCHOOL
GARFIELD ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL
JOLIET CHILDREN'S SCHOOL
LAKEVIEW ACADEMY
LAKEVIEW COMMUNITY SCHOOL COALITION
LATINO YOUTH ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL
LEARNING NETWORK
NATIVE AMERICAN COMMITTEE SCHOOL
OPERATION IMPACT
PARENT'S SCHOOL NURSERY
PARENT'S SCHOOL
PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY SCHOOL
PHOENIX
PROLOGUE
RAFAEL CANCEL MIRANDA HIGH SCHOOL
ROGERS PARK COMMUNITY SCHOOL
RUIZ BELVIS CULTURAL CENTER
ST. MARY'S CENTER FOR LEARNING
ST. MARY'S COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER
ST. MARY'S DAY CARE CENTER
SOUTHERN SCHOOL
SULLIVAN HOUSE
DANIEL HALE WILLIAMS WEST SIDE PREP
WOODLAWN PREP

of a specific topic, usually planned and moderated by two or three people. These topics have included funding, working with difficult children, learning disabilities, discipline, the politics of education, proposed state recognition guidelines for non-public schools. The membership also meets irregularly for other purposes, such as a social, a retreat, or the larger extravaganza of a conference.

Responsibility for electing the Board of Directors and establishing policies which guide the officers and staff in their work rests with the membership. Significant policies include personnel items such as hiring and firing procedures and criteria for determining eligibility for membership.

The membership also takes advantage of the Network newsletter to increase communication between schools and with the public. It is a necessary part of the function of the membership to have access to shared ideas, articles, and notices which are available in the newsletter between meetings.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors, has gradually expanded its role as Network activities have become more complex. Its function in the past has essentially been that of planning meetings. Recent changes in both composition and responsibility have been in the direction of greater participation by membership (as represented in the Board) in developing, overseeing and evaluating programs, hiring Network and project staff, representing the ASN in outside groups, developing budgets, and approving proposals for Network projects. Board members used to simply be the four officers of the Network, (two co-chairpersons, a treasurer and a secretary). The Board/Steering Committee is now composed of the four officers plus four at-large members and one representative elected by each Network Project (all are elected yearly). Its monthly meetings are open to any interested ASN member.

COMMITTEES

Committees, which usually function ad hoc, are made up of members who identify a need which they feel can be met by this kind of joint effort. Recently the active committees have included the following:

a) Sports/Social, to foster more interaction among students at the various member schools;

b) Teacher Sharing/Philosophy, to help teachers from different work situations discuss classroom ideas and examine the consistency of classroom practices with their philosophies and ideals;

c) Resource, to collect information about free materials and other available resources and to publish this for the Network and the larger community:

c) Public Information, to help inform the public about alternative schools and to create a set of principles of unity to serve as a working philosophy for the Network;

e) Funding, which might include the establishment of a central proposal library;

f) Organizational Committee, to help schools with incorporating, getting tax-exempt status, seeking accreditation, and dealing with building code violations.

Membership on committees, which is strictly voluntary, reflects the needs and interests of the membership.

MEMBER DIRECTED PROJECTS: YOUTH CREATES AND TRUANCY PROJECT.

Groups receiving funds are designated Network projects and are directed by boards made up of Network representatives.

Youth Creates (funded by the Illinois Public Health Trust) provides small grants to projects proposed by students for creative activities that will increase their self-esteem and confidence. In the first year of the project 22 different projects averaging $619.00 were funded. These involved 485 young people ages 11 to 20 in 18 schools. The students are mostly members of minority groups living in areas where drug use is high, since drug use prevention is the aim of the Illinois Public Health Trust gift.

The Youth Creates board meets twice a month to screen the proposals

submitted by students. This board has four students, four teachers, one ASN staff member, one person from Youth Systems, Inc., and one parent from a parent-run alternative school.

Of all the programs in the Network, the Truancy Program is the most remarkable in its scope and significance. Many schools in the Network are located in areas where the high truancy rates are of great concern to both the schools and the communities. The Truancy Program originated in response to these concerns. In fact , several of the schools already were serving youths who could be classified as truants, drop-outs or push-outs.

The Truancy Prevention Program is administered by the Illinois Office of Education (IOE). Under this program the Alternative Schools Network received this year $191,000.00 which provides schooling for 90 formerly truant students in seven ASN schools. This program is a significant departure from previous methods of dealing with truants; e.g. in Chicago, until quite recently, adjudicated truants had no choice but to go to the Chicago Residential Schools for truants. The ASN program, now in its second year, evolved from a proposal developed by eight Chicago alternative schools in 1974 and funded that fiscal year by the Department of Children and Family Services.

The Alternative Schools Network Truancy Project, though administered by the Network, is under the control of the Truancy Project Board, composed of representatives of the schools in the Project. They meet every two weeks to oversee appropriations of funds to the participating schools, the writing of progress reports, and the activities of the Truancy Project staff.

The Truancy Project staff consists of a full time Director, a full time Education Specialist, and various consultants including an Evaluation team from Northwestern University, psychologists and a psychiatrist, lawyers, and a public relations team. The Director maintains contacts with all governmental agencies that have an interest in the Project, is responsible for submitting monthly reports, keeps track of records and documents and oversees all long

range planning. The Educational Specialist assists the Director in coordinating program activities, oversees general office management, and is responsible for the preparation of reports for the Illinois Office of Education.

The goal of the Project is to re-introduce verified truants to school and integrate them into the school program. The educational component of the Truancy Project is distinct for each school, reflecting the philosophy and resources of that institution. In addition to the educational program, counseling and outreach services are provided.

An adequate evaluation of the Truancy Project has yet to be completed. After two years, however, it is clear that alternative schools have succeeded with the limited number of students they have been able to serve. The rate of success (attendance rate) of the 178 students in the project averaged 77.5% the first year, and 82.5% the second year. These figures are significant because the participating students had been chronic truants in their former schools, frequently absent for months at a time.

A large factor in their success, and even greater potential success, is that alternative schools offer smaller, more informal, more flexible and more individualized settings. In these settings students are given needed attention, facilitating, among other things, positive relationships with adults. Also of importance is the fact that alternative schools are community based and can focus in a continuing way on the needs of the student and his/her family. Close contacts with local community agencies clearly help.

Per student costs in this program are considerebly less than the greater amount of money otherwise spent on these truant youth by the youth service and criminal justice establisment. The Truancy Program not only solves the problem of educating the truant but also saves the state the cost of truant officers, court fees and often institutional or jail costs.

Despite its extraordinary potential, there are some difficulties inherent in the Truancy Project. One of the most damnable problems is that

if a student stays in an alternative school,she/he is no longer a truant, and therefore no longer qualifies for the program. Even if the student likes the alternative school, it may be necessary for him/her to return to the school she/he fled. The schools are put in the position of enforcing compulsory attendance laws, in a manner which is not necessarily consistent with their educational philosophies. Another problem concerns the temporary nature of the funding of this project. IOE is not necessarily committed to alternative schools, thus the project does not have a stable future.

The Truancy Project is of far reaching significance, both in terms of future programs for truant children, and in terms of the implications for future governmental relationships and funding for Network projects. The potential for making contact with "turned off" students has been demonstrated. It remains for other schools and school systems to utilize this type of program for students with similar problems.

The Truancy Project over the past 2 years has solidified and legitimized the relationship between an organization of non-public alternative schools and the state, through its legislative body, office of education, and court system. This in turn has helped the ASN establish relationships with other state and national agencies, e.g. the Illinois Law Enforcement Commisssion. The interest demonstrated by the state in the Network and its programs underscores the need for real alternatives and the success that alternative schools have had with truant students.

FISCAL STATUS

In October, 1973, the ASN was incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in Illinois, making possible an advance ruling on its tax-exempt status by the IRS in May 1974. The final ruling by the IRS followed soon, and it was in this perid that the ASN opened its first bank account. The original income of the Network came mostly from membership dues and the bank balance

stayed around $200 until January 1975 when the ASN began to receive grants. The Youth Creates grant was the first, and the newsletter announcement of this commented, "This can help to establish the credibility of the Network in the eyes of other funding sources." The subsequent funding can best be summarized in Table 1.

Funding for the administration of the Alternative Schools Network comes mainly from the Field Foundation, and the Chicago Community Trust. Some other money comes to the ASN office in the form a project's adminstrative cost; a percentage of a grant goes to general office operation or for the salary of a project coordinator or secretary. School memberships, at $25 a year, could at most draw about $1,000.00 but not all schools are paid up. An attempt has been made to get the public to contribute to the ASN by joining "Friends of the Network" but so far this has been unsuccessful. Several large-scale fundraisers are being planned.

Since grants and contracts start and stop at differnt times, uniform measurement is hard to come by. But since January, 1975, $442,882.00 has been distributed to the Network schools and $83,900.00 has gone to the administration of the Network and its projects. Adminstrative costs constitute 16 percent of the grand total of monies received.

Proposals have been made to various other agencies, and although these have not yet been funded, the Network considers these attempts appropriate first approaches to agencies with whom they may someday work. These have included a Law Enforcement Assistance Administration proposal for the deinstitutionalization of truants, a proposal to the National Institute of Mental Health to measure changes in self-concept in alternative schools children, a proposal to the Illinois Department of Corrections to develop more resources for the schools, and a Title I ESEA proposal to the Chicago Board of Education.

TABLE 1 GRANTS RECEIVED BY THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS NETWORK SINCE JANUARY 1975

Granting Agency	Amount	Project Description	Inclusive Dates	Administered by	% costs going to ASN for adminsitration.
Illinois Public Health Trust	$21,552.00 5,000.00	"Youth Creates" Drug Diversion & Prevention Project	1/31/75 4/76-4/77	Member Board & Network Coordinator	
Illinois Arts	3,875.00	Video Project-to instruct students in the use of video equiptment.	3/75-2/76 3/76	Video Project Coordinator	
Vista Federal	72,000.00	16 volunteers for schools & Network office.	3/75	Network Coordinator	5%
CETA Federal	167,359.00	Personnel for schools & Network	9/75-9/76	Network Coordinator	6%
Illinois Office of Education	191,000.00	Truancy Program	10/75	Member Board & Truancy Program Director	16%
Chicago Community Trust	21,000.00	Administrative Costs	3/75-76	Network Coordinator	100%
Chicago Community Trust	15,000.00	Administrative Costs	76-77	Network Coordinator	100%
Field Foundation	5,000.00	Administrative Costs	75-76	Network Coordinator	100%
Field Foundation	5,000.00	Administrative Costs	76-77	Network Coordinator	100%

BENEFIT LIST

19[illegible]-1976 Funding						1977	
Ancona							
Austin Christian	VISTA					VISTA	
Benjamin Bannaker	CETA						
Bethel Cam	TRUANCY	VISTA	CETA	VIDEO	YOUTH CREATES		
B.U.I.L.D. Inc.							
Cabrini-Green	TRUANCY					VISTA	VIDEO
Cabrini Learning Center	$$$ FOOD BOOTH		CETA	CAMPING EQUIPMENT			
CAM	TRUANCY	VISTA	CETA	YOUTH CREATES			
ST. Mary's Day Care	CETA	YOUTH CREATES		CAMPING EQUIPMENT		VISTA	
Chrysalis	CETA	YOUTH CREATES				VISTA	VIDEO
Coop Kindergarten	CETA						
Coop Middle	CETA						
Coop #3	CETA	YOUTH CREATES					
Council School	VISTA						
DuPage Community H. S.	TRUANCY	YOUTH CREATES					
Family Free School	CETA						
Foundation School	CETA						
Garfield Alternative	TRUANCY	CETA	VISTA				
Joliet Children's School							
Lakeview Community Schools Coalition	CAMPING EQUIPMENT		VISTA			VIDEO	
Lakeview Acadamy	VISTA	CETA	ART	YOUTH CREATES			
Latino Youth Alt. H. S.	TRUANCY	ART	CETA	YOUTH CREATS	CAMPING EQUIPMENT		
Learning Network	VISTA	CETA	VIDEO	YOUTH CREATES			
Native American Committee School	CETA	ART					
Ope[illegible]ion Impact	CETA						
Parent School Nursery							

Parent School		
Peoples Community School	CETA	VISTA
Phoenix	CETA	$$ FOOD BOOTH CHILDREN's BOOKS ART
Prologue	CETA	TRUANCY YOUTH CREATES VISTA CAMPING EQUIPMENT VIDEO
Rafael Cancel Miranda	VISTA	CETA YOUTH CREATES
Rogers Park	CETA	VISTA
Ruiz Belvis Cultural C.	VISTA	CETA VIDEO TEXTBOOKS
St. Mary's Community Ed.	CETA	YOUTH CREATES VISTA
Southern School	CETA	TRUANCY YOUTH CREATES
St. Mary's Center for Learning	TRUANCY	CETA VISTA YOUTH CREATES CAMPING EQUIPMENT
Sullivan House	CETA	VISTA TRUANCY VIDEO YOUTH CREATES
Daniel Hale Williams West Side Prep	CETA	
Woodlawn Prep	CETA	YOUTH CREATES.

MEETING THE STATED GOAL: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS NETWORK.

Throughout the history of the ASN, three basic goals have remained constant as stated in its bylaws.

1. To develop resources for the alternative schools in their area of need;
2. To develop mutual support and sharing of information among the various alternative schools;
3. To inform the general public of what alternative schools are and what they do, and to influence the public school system through the demonstration of effective schools.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The most dramatic efforts and successes of the ASN staff have been in resource development. As discussed in the Fiscal Status section, the Network has generated approximately one half million dollars for the other schools.

What effect have these resources had on the alternative schools? The resources have increased the population the schools have been able to serve; expanded the schools' opportunities to serve low-income, non-tuition paying students; enabled some schools to reduce class size; allowed some schools to enrich their curricula by supplying trained personnel to work in the schools. In all the schools the program has been enriched by access to Network funds and resources, and in at least two schools it is difficult to see how the school could have survived without this assistance. Although most schools are not dependent on the ASN, Network-accumulated resources facilitate their operation. The effect of these cumulative resources on the educational components of the schools has been immeasureable.

VISTA volunteers and people in CETA positions have been trained in the schools to perform a variety of jobs, often something that fills a particular need. ASN programs have also enabled schools that cannot afford the luxury of an art program or a video experience to have them. Youth Creates has had especially diverse effects, helping support a high school basketball

team and promoting over thirty separate student-initiated projects.

The Network has counselled schools on where to apply for funds and how to draft proposals or applications to HEW, Chicago Skills Center, Archdiocese Lunch Program, the Federal Office of Education, National Institute of Mental Health, and sources of funding for special education. For people in small alternative schools who have little or no familiarity with the world of grants and proposals, this can be an eye-opener. Prologue School found out about Urban Skills money through the Network and LakeView Academy found out about that from Prologue. The Network helped Rogers Park School get $10,000.00 for building and remodelling, and Lake View Schools Coalition $25,000.00 for operating budget from the Joyce Foundation, a Chicago family foundation. ASN keeps in touch with the Donors Forum, a Chicago library of materials on foundations , and subscribes to various journals concering private and governmental grants to education.

Other resources, such as books, volunteers, plywood, and professional advice have also been offered to the schools. These depend on availability and the time staff can devote to tracking them down and collecting them.

SUPPORT AND SHARING

The intention of the Network to help overcome the sense of isolation felt by schools and teachers and parents has led to a wealth of activities and patterns of interaction. The word "Network" implies the concept of contacts between its elements, and for the ASN, support and sharing are functions carried out as much between individuals and schools as by the centralized office.

Previously described joint activities include the social and sports events of the Network and the coordination of similar programs. One tangible result of the work of the Resource Committee has been the publication

of a 48 page manual of resources, "Alternative Curriculum". Schools also cooperate in sharing of some classes, curriculum development and their own resources.

The monthly newsletter is a very important part of the communication function of the Network. There are about five hundred names on the mailing list. The Newsletter goes to all the teachers and administrators working in Network schools. It also goes to people working at different funding agencies; people working in alternative programs outside the Network; ex-Network teachers and people who are just interested in alternative education. Most people receive the Newsletter free although about a dozen people have sent in donations to cover costs.

As stated above, the telephone and newsletter are major elements in the clearinghouse functions of the ASN.

Files are kept at the office on issues of concern, such as building code requirements and school accreditation, and these are available to members. A directory of schools and individual teachers and administrators has been put together , a useful tool for people in the ASN to contact one another. In addition to counseling existing schools, the ASN office also gets calls from one or two people a month who are interested in starting a school. The Network assisted in getting Latino Youth High School started in the fall of 1975, mainly by putting the school's founders in touch with an existing high school which they used a a model. Calls are more frequently received from parents looking for a place other than a public school for their children. Often there is not an alternative school in their area, or if there is, it is filled. The disproportion between the number of calls in search of an alternative school over the number of school slots available demonstrates the need for more alternative schools. The Network also operates a job match up service. There are about 150 people currently listed with the ASN as seeking teaching positions.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Many people who receive the newsletter are not in ASN member schools, so this is a continuing form of educating the public about non-public schools. In addition, several brochures about the ASN have been created and distributed during the last three years. A position paper on non-public education was written by the Public Information Committee. Radio spot annoucements about the ASN are run free as a public service by local radio stations and each typically brings in a spurt of calls. A caller to the ASN office can now receive a list of alternative schools that are Network members, in addition to the annual NEW SCHOOL NEWS directory which is a more comprehensive listing of alternative education programs in the Chicago ares.

One of the strong points of alternative schools is that they stay in intimate contact with, in order to be fully responsive to, local conditions among students, parents, and the community. The ASN provides a major service in keeping up on larger issues of the broader context of city, state and national communities. This is especially true on the crucial issue of accreditation or recognition by the state. One action of the very first meeting of the ASN was to elect a representative to the Illinois Advisory Committee on Non-Public Schools, a group which has had substantial impact in getting state recognition stopped until guidelines can be worked out that are appropriate for non-public schools. The coordinator has also been serving on a task force to formulate guidelines for the distribution of LEAA funds in Cook County. State and local agencies are beginning to recognize the potential of developing a working relationship with the ASN.

Schools can acquire legitimacy in the public regard by being a member of an organization such as the Alternative Schools Network, and many do list that as a part of their identity in their publicity. The other direction of this two-way street is that the ASN can say to the public that it speaks for around forty schools. The number of schools involved is an essential condition

for attracting most funding--foundations want to see that the money they give will have a "ripple effect" and that giving to one place will have an effect on forty others. Government agencies find it easier to work with one place rather than with many. This is especially true when the office, as in the case of the Chicago VISTA office or the Illinois Office of Education, Department of Compensatory Education, does not have much of a staff itself. They are happy to have some of the administrative chores done by the ASN.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONCERNS

One of the greatest accomplishments of the Alternative Schools Network is that it exist at all, given the fact that the membership is made up of individuals who have little time to do anything except to survive in their own schools, and given the external difficulties of maintaining an enterprise devoted to a phenomenon--alterantive education--the American public thoroughly misunderstands.

The people who are in the thick of deliberation about the future of the ASN believe in the potential of this Network and others like it, but they are now struggling with a cluster of basic problems. These problems, as they have been discussed by the membership at large and by the Network staff, should be included here, for they may point to the issues that any such enterprise must address.

PAPTICIPATION

Sporadic debate arises over criteria for ASN membership. Requirements for ASN membership now are that the school: 1) be incorporated as not-for-profit; 2) be independent in that the school is self-governing, makes its own policies, determines its own philosophy; and 3) be located in Illinois. Duties of membership are: 1) pay dues and have a delegate and an alternate; 2) attend at least six monthly meetings per year; 3) participate in committees, and 4) work for the

advancement of alternative schools.

At this time the most basic problem of the ASN is the extent of active participation. On one hand the Network seeks to enlarge membership to be as broad based as possible and with the greatest possible impact. On the other hand the ASN has not found a way to insure the level of committment and participation necessary to maintain its identity as a member-run organization. In addition, if private foundation funding should dry up next year and the office disappears, only volunteer and member participation would remain, so it is essential for the maintenance of the Network that a substantial degree of active involvement exist.

Some suggestions have been made to increase participation-- that staff persons and ASN members visit each others' schools and school events, that communication be increased on topics other than funding, and that more frequent workshops be organized around particular topics.

DIRECTION

Some concern also exists about the allocation of resources. The Network receives and adminsters a great deal of money, but not every school benefits directly. Some schools in the Network, particularly the larger accredited schools, those serving students for whom public money has been made available, are better able to participate in projects yielding large amount of money. Other schools question the focus of Network priorities on efforts which do not benefit them financially.

Also questioned is the tendency of new programs to be developed on the basis of available funding. Funds are now more easily obtained to meet needs not being met by the public sector and this funding encourages the alternative schools to become more involved with problems society has not solved in other ways. It is not the intention of alternative schools to relieve the public sector of their responsibility towards students with problems.

STRUCTURE

A key issue for a city wide organization composed of autonomous neighborhood groups lies in the growth of these groups' sense of ownership for the broader organization, its governance and direction. Concretely this means that while any organization begins through the work of a small group of individuals, for that organization to continue it must develop a broader base of participation. This leads to a constant effort to find a workable structure.

The resistance to a tight structure, felt by schools who are fiercely autonomous, and the evolving need for some structure (especially as the ASN comes into contact with outside agencies) has balanced out into a rather loose structure, with the coordinator taking on the bulk of the administrative tasks and substantial decision-making responsibility. Many of the more involved members regret the extent to which the functioning of the organization depends on the efforts of one individual. So if the problem is widening from a narrow power base, the solution seems to be the decentralization of the coordinator's responsibilities by means of a strong Board of Directors. The Board has now mandated that each project of the ASN have a committee and that each committee send a representative to Board of Director meetings. At this point both Youth Creates and the Truancy Project have committees which function in a semi-autonomous fashion.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The ASN, three years old in June, indeed still faces many of the same challenges and conditions present from its inception. However, in the struggles of the last three years the individuals within the organization and the organization itself have matured. The ASN is a broader-based organization than it was, stronger because the elements of which it is composed are stronger. A mutuality of purpose has evovled and with it, a synergetic

relationship among the parts of the organization.

Further growth and expansion of the Network are indicated by several factors. Many of the individuals who were present when the Network was formed are still active in the affairs of the organization, bringing to it their experience and expertise. Thus, the Network now has a stable base of support on which to build. In addition, the schools and in turn the Network, are not static institutions. Sensitive to a changing environment, they encourage an awareness of choice in their day-to-day operations. This modus operandi attracts enthusiastic supporters, staff, and participants to the schools and eventually to the Network Thus the Network is the beneficiary of a pool of young , energetic supporters.

The Network has become better known and respected by the larger community. As indicated earlier, it has come to the attention of various governmental agencies, which see various ways of working with alternative schools. As its activities expand, the Network continues to make a greater and greater impact on other educational institutions, youth-serving agencies and on the consciousness of individuals. Given a relatively stable funding future, the prospects for the Network are excellent.

PART III

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AND NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AND THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS NETWORK.

It is difficult to pinpoint the advantages of alternative schools over the public school system for several reasons. One is that it is nearly impossible, expecially given the limited time available to research this report, to get a hold on everything that is going on in the public school system. Some individual public schools and classrooms are certainly similar in spirit and practice to some of the alternative schools. In fact, some of the public schools have established what they call "alternative" programs within their confines, though the accuracy of this title is open to question.

Another impediment to full clarity on the subject is the difficulty of proving the claims of the alternative schools themselves. Their enthusiasm and determination are visible and real; whether or not their graduates are better off than they would have been without the schools is not objectively demonstrable. For one thing, as has been discussed in Part One, the schools have broader, more complex goals than can be evaulated by standardized tests. The abilities to think critically, make choices and act responsbily are not criteria tested by the S.A.T. , Metropolitan Achievement, or similar tests.

Coupled with this is the fact that many alternative schools have resisted the kind of self-evaluation and record-keeping that would enable comparison with conventional schooling. They have felt that it is impossible to get a standard measure when it is just the measure(among other things) that is in question: for an alternative program one needs an alternative measure, but such methods have not been, and may never be standardized.[9] Many of the schools now do give standardized tests and keep records on student progress, and on where students go after leaving the alternative schools, but this is a recent phenomenon.

ADVANTAGES OVER THE STANDARD SYSTEM

However, the fact that alternative schools do exist with such variety and vitality despite the hardships entailed for everyone concerned, means that they must provide something not found in the available conventional schools. For each of the alternative schools, some mixture of the following factors is entailed;

PERSONAL ATTENTION

Class sizes are uniformly smaller in alternative schools than in conventional ones. Students are not only better known to their own teachers, but generally relate on some level to each of the school's staff. Their progress and problems are followed closely-- and, very unlike many public schools, no alternative school student has a chance of being anonymous or "lost in the crowd".

The greater personal intimacy at alternative schools also derives from its identity as a community-based school. Teachers frequently live in the community, see their students on the streets and in the grocery stores, get to know their families and make it their business to incorporate their knowledge of a student's total life into their understanding of his or her school needs.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Largely because of the level of personal attention and the visible responsiveness of the schools to student concerns, students feel a sense of ownership of their schools. The informality, flexibility, and the emphasis on individually defined success rather than on competition and failure, also create an environment startlingly different from that of the public schools, which in their uniformity and regimentation sometimes resemble factories or prisons more than educational establishements.

EDUCATION FOR LIFE

The complexity of modern life and the certainty of continual change underlie the necessity for students "learning how to learn." Though this notion was espoused years ago by John Dewey, alternative schools are in the forefront of its recent re-affirmation in educational circles. Four recurrent themes in this initiative are: respect for personality, developing a sense of responsibility rather than a passive obedience to rules and regulations, choice, and wholeness.

If there is one primary theme in philosophies of alternative education, it is choice. Even though public school people talk about alternative, alternative schools have been able to actually move on to experience what that means in the education they offer. It means giving students practice in deliberating about what are good choices, in making choices, in learning partly by making mistakes, and developing confidence in their powers of managing their own lives. This takes different forms in different schools. Learning survival skills--how to fill out a job application form, among other things--is a means of raising consciousness about life before one is kicked out into the living of it. The very struggles that a school experiences can be part of a student's education in coping with the world.

One of the reasons that the whole operation of an alternative school can be an education to students is that one feature of this enterprise is a resistance to compartmentalization, and this manifests itself as a dedication to the whole person. For the most part, there is no separation of teacher and counsellor in alternative schools. Teachers get to know student's cognitive and affective characteristics. Greater continuity is fostered between normally segregated realities: academics and experience, thought and feeling, school and world. Although differences are recognized between older and younger people, a double standard of judgement is avoided. In some cases, younger and older kids work together, the younger ones learning from the older, the older

ones getting remedial work by listening to the younger. The alternative schools have been careful to guard the dignity of and self-esteem of all concerned

VIOLENCE AND DRUGS

Partially because of the sense of ownership felt by students, and partly because they come to alternative schools by choice, we found no record of vandalism, assaults on teachers, or serious drug problems in the alternative schools. Students may be involved in gang hostilities or drugs outside of school, but these activities do not carry over into the school day. Alternative schools could be too easily shut down if such activity could be identified with them, and students seem willing and able to curtail it for the good of the schools. The potential of alternative schools in curtailing and preventing delinquency is being recognized by the increasing number of law enforcement and related agencies now interacting with the schools.

DECENTRALIZED POWER

It would be difficult for a Chicago public school to give anything more than a false impression that input by parents, students or even by staff in the schools have much effect on fundamental decisions about the schools. A crucial difference from public schools is that alternative schools have decentralized power structures in relation to their "united effort," the ASN, the schools are autonomous. In their internal decision-making procedures, they try to involve as many people as possible who will be affected by the decisions.

Teachers in the schools say they are much more satisfied with their jobs than when they were teaching in public school, even though the job they have requires much more energy and time than did their previous positions. They have fewer students and can help them better. Though they receive guidance from parents and administrative staff, they do not feel oppressed by a top-

heavy administration. In the Chicago public schools, it has taken anywhere from two weeks to two months to get permission to take a field trip. In most alternative schools, a field trip can be a spur-of-the-moment decision. Even at the most innovative public schools, staff may not be allowed to stay in the building after a certain time of day. Not so in the ASN schools. What results from this is a greater sense of possession and pride by all involved in the schools. A school can grow organically, according to experienced needs, rather than being forced to change according to bureaucratic policy.

Administrative flexibility also means that the broader community of parents, neighborhood residents, and indigenous institutions can participate in alternative schools more fully than they can in the traditional arrangement in Chicago. They can benefit from that participation by the sense of community that is generated, a sense of concern and sharing that cannot help but improve the environment a young person lives in. Especially parents need to be close to the schools, since many problems students have originate in the family--or in the lack of one. The school may have a close relationship with other community agenices, so that when a problem with a student arises--out of social or economic needs--that problem can be determined in a shorter time than required by the public school apparatus, and resources can be mobilized from within the community to solve it.

It is true that, because of requirements for receiving federal money, Chicago public schools have instituted advisory councils in the school districts. Sincere efforts have been made here and there to get parent participation in the schools. Bu t this participation can at most be pressure from the outside to influence a decision, never the making of decisions themselves. Even very small matters, such as the building of a fence around a school, have to be acted on by the Board of Education itself. In any case, rather than trying more or less sincerely to <u>add on</u> community participation, the alternative schools in most cases have <u>grown out of</u> community needs, either the community of parents, of

students (assisted by former public shcool teachers) , or of community workers. The schools are not only alter; they are also native to their own times and places. They do not have to retrieve what they never lost.

EXPENSE

Does it cost more or less to provide an alternative education in Chicago than it does to offer standard programs through the Board of Education? Here again, detailed analysis has not been possible in the preparation of this report.

Though a low student-teacher ratio may be expected to correlate with high per pupil costs, other factors such as lower teacher salaries, fewer non-teaching personnel, less special equipment for labs, sports, and music programs, the availability of volunteers, and the resourcefulness of alternative school people in finding free and inexpensive materials all contribute to an actual per pupil cost lower than that of the public schools.

Per pupil costs in alternative schools range from $430.00 per year to $4,000.00 per year, and average approximately $1,200.00. In District 24 of the Chicago Public Schools[10] the average per pupil costs , according to the 1975-76 budget, is $1,172.00 per year. However, when you look closer at the two figures, you will discover that the ASN figures include both the higher cost special education programs and the building costs to the school. The Board of Education figures do not include either of these costs which are considerable. As such the Network per pupil costs are actually several hundred dollars lower than the Board of Education.

TEN CONDITIONS FOR GENESIS AND MAINTENANCE

According to the experience of the Chicago Alternative Schools Network the following five conditions are essential for the existence of alternative schools. Five additional conditions are necessary for the

genesis of an alterantive schools's network.

1. Deficiencies in Available Education

The sine qua non of alternative schools is the inability of parents, teachers, and students to find what they want in a public school system. If they could , it is unlikely that they would go to the trouble of setting up or supporting new schools. This includes people looking for a less stifling, or even a safer school situation, or parents, teachers, students, and community institutions desiring to have more control over the education of young people. The needs felt by each of these parties or some combination of them, are the beginnings of alternative schools.

This is not to say that all public school systems are the same. Doubtless some public schools are offering a humanistic education as well as even better than many alternative schools. In places where such offerings are widespread it is unlikely that alternative schools would reach the magnitude they have in Chicago. A necessary condition of a whole alternative enterprise such as the Chicago model is a rigidly structured hierarchical and unresponsive Board of Education.

2. Legal/Political Tolerance

It is essential to the existence of alternative schools that legislation, political policies, or social pressure not prohibit such schools. It would be too much to ask for sympathetic understanding and active support by the American public. But if, for example, government intervention reaches a certain point, a school will probably close. In the late 1960's this happened to a free school whose students were conspicuously in attendance at the Chicago Seven trial. One day a young lady standing outside the school, in a typical flower-child gesture, waved to a passing patrol car ; the policemen returned in force to arrest the whole school on a charge of prostitution.

The looseness of the interpretation of a "school" for the purposes of the compulsory attendance law, and the current moratorium on school recognition by the State of Illinois, plus an absence of high political tensions in Chicago, nowadays provide the Chicago alternative schools with an unthreatening environment though not a vigorously supportive one.

3. Space

If the powers that be are flexible about the definition of a school and the quality of its programs, such is much less the case about the condition of the physical space that a school occupies. This is subject to examination by city building and fire inspectors . Some schools do not in fact meet code requirements. Located in an office building, for example, all the rooms used for classes do not open into a hallway; or, located in a store-front, the school does not have a sprinkler system, which can be very expensive. The schools reply that they are not in fact endangering students, since the school area is so small that students have easy access to a hallway or to the store-front door in front or back. Those regulations were made for the typically gargantuan, old, Chicago public school building, which even now are in violation of many provisions of the code. Many schools keep a low profile in their community because they do not want to attract attention from public inspection officials.

4. People

Merely having a reason for seeking an alternative social tolerance of pursuing that goal, and an acceptable place to locate does not mean that an alternative school is going to come into existence. Dynamism has to come from highly motivated people. These are usually parents or former public school teachers influenced by needs in some particular community area. Obviously a school cannot get started without students who are attracted to the school, but this is seldom a problem in Chicago. The supply of students, especially in

inner city areas, is plentiful-- an indication of the need for alternative schools.

The typical scenario for the start of an alternative school is that - one person leads the way. Around that person may be two to four other "prime movers". To hack out a clearing in the urban underbrush-- a place for learning-- demands a high degree of energy, dedication, and perseverance. These people must be willing to work long hours with little reward other than a feeling of creating a new reality and perhaps a sense of benefitting young people. They must be willing to tolerate disorganization and to work with people in unstructured situations. They must be able to initiate projects as an individual but share activities as part of a group. They should expect to run the risk of "burning out" --running out of energy--after a few years. The continued health of the alternative schools movement depends on periodically getting a fresh supply of enthusiastic people.

Most of the staff in the Chicago alternative schools are not over thirty years old. Many of these people have had bad experiences in the public schools: as students or teachers or both, they were forced to conform in ways they feel stifled their creativity or impinged on their effectiveness as teachers.

5. Money

Theoretically an alternative school could be maintained without outside funding. Some schools have started out using volunteers, donated space and materials, and very little else requiring funding. This can be sufficient only for a short period of time and for small schools: therefore, most schools require some source of income. A given shcool may function on parent tuition, community support, government contracts, or private grants. Alternative schools are vulnerable to change in availability of funds and must recognize the instability of whatever funding sources on which they are dependent.

The five necessary conditions for the establishiment of alternative schools are also essential to a network of alternative schools: money, people , space, a legal basis, and a need for alternatives to public education. However, the five following conditions are more specific to the network dimension of this enterprise.

6. Alternative Schools.

For the establishment of an Alternative Schools Network, there must necessarily be alternative schools. A network, not being a Board of Education, can not bring schools into existence and then control them. Less than ten schools would probably not provide a broad enough base to impress outside agencies nor enough people and time to accomplish the network's business.

7. Magnitude of Needs

Schools support and belong to an alternative schools network because their needs are of such magnitude that belonging to such an organization may benefit them. It can satisfy their need for moral support, for acquiring funds and other resources from outside agencies, or for help in dealing with outside institutions on legal or educationl issues.

8. Organic Growth

The Network deals with highly individualistic and anti-bureaucratic member schools and individuals. In this context the organization has had to develop organically and without domination of or imposition upon its members. Antecedent attempts to form federations and coalitions laid the groundwork for greater acceptance later. It is inevitable, given the diversity of the constituency and their needs, that the priorities, balance of power and nature of the work attempted will continue to change. One may even wonder if a struggle is a prime ingredient in this enterprise: for example, might it not become even more

jeopardized by becoming institutionalized and static than by losing its financial base or office space.

9. Workers

Similar to the necessity for enthusiastic workers in the alternative schools, the Network of Alternative Schools, as it has developed in Chicago, has been based on a core of people willing to devote time and energy to it. In addition, it has been essential to this network to have a staff person able to give full time attention to the development of resources, projects and communication among the schools. Alternative school people feel that funding for this staff person must be free of constraints imposed by the funding source.

10. Projects

For a school network to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of its members and funding sources it has to be effective, it has to accomplish something. In the ASN this has meant formation of projects and committees whose work is carried out by and substantially benefits the member schools.

PROSPECTS FOR ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS NETWORKS

Since the existence of alternative schools depends on deficiencies in local public schools, moves underway within public education to generate alternative programs could have the effect of co-opting the alternative schools movement. Nor are prospects ever good for alternative schools (much less whole networks of them) where public schools are indeed providing a decent human environment, vigorous in developing basic skills. Prospects are not favorable for alternative schools not only where the public schools are indeed doing a good job, but also where everyone has been led to believe they are, even if this is not so.

In November of 1975 a new office was opened in the Chicago Board of Education on alternative programs. A directory of the available alternative programs has been an initial goal of this office, including only the programs in the public schools. Further projects are planned to aid community groups to develop clusters of various educational options in their area, projects that the alternatives office would promote before the Board of Education. The director of this office calls what he wants to set up a "network," and believes that people should have more choice in education than offered by any single public school. Already there are alternative programs at several suburban public high schools and no non-public alternative high schools exist in those areas. In Chicago, Metro High School, Walt Disney Magnet Elementary School, and Whitney Young Magnet High School are innovations in the public system. Since 1971 there has been a program in the Catholic schools to develop non-traditional classroom situations. An office on alternatives now exists in the State Office of Edcuation, and one of their first jobs was to do an inventory of several alternative programs in Illinois public schools. An Illinois Network on School Development has been created to draw funds to these programs.

The alternative school movement is also dependent on availability of staff willing to work for very low salaries. As a result, a favorable prospect for the U. S. employment situation in general is an unfavorable one for alternative schools. This is probably a small threat since there would still be many people who would be willing to work for low pay as long as they felt they were accomplishing more than they could elsewhere.

The fate of the alternative school movement will also be influenced by the extent of public understanding of and sympathy with alternative education. At the moment this is low, and unless more vigorous efforts are made to inform and persuade the American public, it is likely to remain so.

A factor favorable to the prospects of an alternative school network

is the possible recognition of the unique benefits of alternative schools not only over the standard systems but over almost all alternatives within that system. The most outstanding feature of alternative schools from this point of view has to do with the power to control the school. By its very nature a public sytem can decentralize only to a limited extent. Though it is "public" this has meant in fact, thata bureaucracy has grown up to control the schools, an apparatus that stands in the way of intimate participation by the public. This is especially true in a big American city such as Chicago. Even with the best will and wishes for recent public school initiatives for alternative in Chicago, one had to be pessimistic about how far these will reach. Public alternative programs have tended to cost more than the standard programs because the Board of Education seems to interpret alternative programs to mean more expensive buildings and equipment. Since the Chicago public schools are also always searching for more money, the prospects for their establishing more than a token alternative program are dim. About the only hope lies in teacher retraining programs and school counselling by outside agencies. It is disappointing to note that when a public school's enrollment drops below a certain point it is almost inevitably closed rather than being developed into a smaller, more intimate school, similar to the alternative schools.

Though funding for education itself is diminishing, educational institutions are seen more and more as places for dealing with a variety of other problems. Funding to attack such problems as truancy, low self-esteem, lack of job preparedness is increasingly available. Social policy makers have turned to schools as being the kinds of places where appropriate socialization and education in life can take place. Alternative school show great promise in affecting the administration of juvenile justice. The ASN Truancy Program is a precedent for this, though a most unintended one.

One reason people belive that public schools should care for all schooling needs is that public money supports the schools. But this arrangement is not written in the heavens: a voucher system is equally possible,

whereby money would go to parents to be used on the school of their choice. Though there are no clear moves underway in this direction, the voucher system may be established in the U. S. before the end of this century. Many people in alternative schools would support such a system, maintaining that there is no reason not to regard alternative schools as public. As an ASN newsletter stated in 1974: "If 'public' were defined as (a) open to everyone on a nondiscriminatory basis, (b) charging no tuition, (c) providing full information about itself and accountability to its 'community', then many alternative schools are indeed public schools and eligible for State Aid Formula."

Another major sign of progress and strength in the alternative schools movement is an increasing recognition of the need for order or "structure" in their own organizational practices and discipline in their schools. At a national convention of alternative schools, sponsored by the ASN in Chicago in May, 1976, Jonathan Kozol ridiculed as unrealistic the old free school notion of resisting absolutely any constraints. Alternative schools themselves are better organized than ever before. At the national convention last May, about fifteen coalitions of alternative schools from around the U. S. created a National Coalition of Alternative Schools, with the hope of becoming more visible and influential on the federal level than they have been heretofore. A good deal of discussion has been devoted to the possibility and desirability of alternative schools networks and coalitions serving as accrediting agencies for alternative schools.

As for the public's attitude toward alternative education, curiosity and support may be aroused as it becomes evident that these schools have not peaked out and begun to vanish but are still surviving, and in most cases, thriving. Legislation favorable to Illinois non-public schools is likely to proceed under the guidance of a State advisory commission. With all the diversity of situations in alternative schools, itis nothing short ofa marvel that social scientists have not inundated the field with research. Scientific attention may be drawnin that direction in the coming years. One function of this report has been to enable

further consideration of alternative education to be directed into appropriate channels.

QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE THOUGHT AND RESEARCH

While researching this report, the writers have encountered numerous questions and areas of concern that would be important and possible even essential to a full understanding of alternative education in Chicago. Some of these questions would be fairly simple to answer, given adequate time. Others would require sophisticated data collection and analysis procedures.

There are some philosophic questions important to consider when viewing the alternative school phenomenon. These questions have to do with the underlying assumptions and "weltanschauung"of the people who have created these schools.

1. What is the difference between being an alternative and a model? What does being an effective model mean for an alternative school?

2. How can personal autonomy and decision making be balanced with group and institutional decision making? How is the tension between individual freedom and group responsibility resolved?

3. How can schools reconcile the divergent desires of students and teachers in determining what is taught and what is learned?

4. What is the optimum school size? How do schools weigh the need for intimacy and flexibility relative to the possibilities for greater diversity, interaction and efficiency in a larger school?

5. How does viewing the school as an end in itself or as part of a larger process of change affect the direction of the school?

6. What is the role of the alternative school in providing a safety valve for the public schools? Are students and parents who might be critical of and a challenge to the public schools siphoned off by alternative schools?

7. What is the desirablility of trying to impact the public schools? What has been that impact to date?

The following questions may be appropriate for research involving sophisticated data collection and analysis:

1. What are the effects of alternative schools on (a) academic achievement, (b) on self concept, (c) on opportunities and directions taken by students after leaving an alternative schools?

2. What various evaluation procedures are appropriate to alternative schools--how well are these schools meeting their goals?

3. What are the key aspects of alternative schools in reducing violence--what is the extent of their effect?

4. What is the correlation between student success and (a) teacher self-image; (b) parent and community participation in the school; (c) student decision making power; (d) class size?

5. What are the actual costs of various forms of alternative education?

6. What changes besides increased school attendance are seen in truants enrolled in alternative schools?

7. How could a voucher system be initiated in Illinois?-- Would a voucher system be more effective in a region where a wide variety of established alternative schools are available than in a region whose schools are more homogeneous?

8. What could a nationwide search uncover about cooperation between public and non-public school systems? What does this cooperation accomplish and can it be generalized?

CONCLUSION

This report is a distillation of a great deal of information on a highly complex phenomenon. The study of the Alternative Schools Network and its member schools has involved consideration of the institutions themselves as well as their impact and place in the Chicago area. A network of alternative schools may be a new phenomenon, but in the brief perid of time the ASN has been in

existence it has demonstrated a great deal of potential for service to schools, students, parents, and the community. It is hoped that not only will readers unfamiliar with the Alternative Schools in Chicago find this report edifying but that the ASN members themselves will augment their appreciation of the history and scope of their common enterprise.

1 -- This does not include all the non-public, non-parochial schools in the Chicago area. Types of schools that have not joined the ASN include schools that are just starting up, traditional private schools, schools that are for profit, schools that don't want any publicity, and various special education schools.

2 -- These figures do not take into account such factors as the welfare system which officially forces fathers out of homes so that their families can survive. They also do not tell how many families include grandmothers and other relatives, nor how many children are in the families. These figures would be necessary in order to accurately interpret this information.

3 -- In the case of three of the schools funded by the Urban Skills Center to teach for the G.E.D. high school equivalency test, Urban Skills does the hiring. Though the schools generally get the teachers they recommend, this can present a real problem when they don't.

4 -- Illinois Revised Statutes, Chapter 122, sec. 26-1 (1). In Legal Manual for Alternative Schools, published 1972 by Nan Hunter and the Counter Culture Law Project, Chicago, Illinois.

5 -- Legal Manual for Alterantive Schools, op. cit., p.9.

6 -- Dennison quoted in Kozol, Jonathan. Free Schools. i.i.i. Houghton-Mifflin, Boston.

7 -- In the March-April issue of New Schools News.

8 -- In some cases the requirements for participation in a project may necessitate compliance with externally imposed standards and any school which participates accepts these controls as fair exchange for the benefits received.

9 -- For information on non-traditional grading systems, see the National Center for Grading/Learning Alternatives.

10--District 24 is chosen as an example because it includes one of the most expensive schools and one of the least expensive schools in Chicago.